

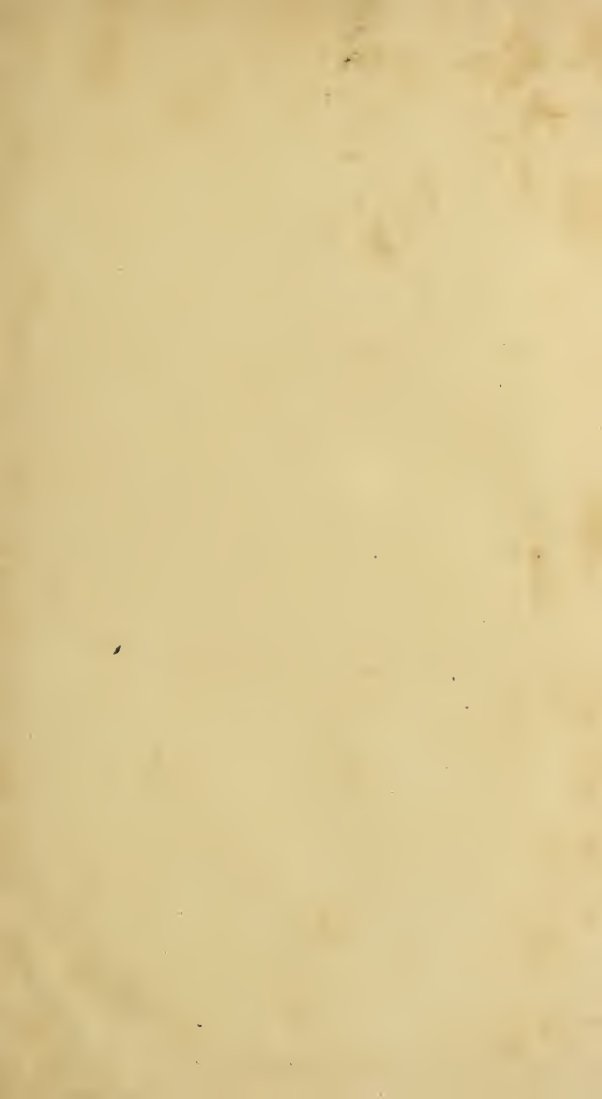
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MISCELLANEOUS SERMONS.

GRACE BE WITH ALL THEM THAT LOVE OUR LORD JESUS CHRIST
IN SINCERITY.—*Ephes.* vi. 24.

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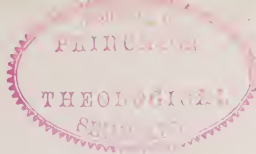
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THE ALMOST-CHRISTIAN DISCOVERED.

Then Agrippa said unto Paul, almost thou persuadest me to be a Christian. ACTS xxvi. 28.

IN this chapter we have St. Paul, in his fetters, pleading before that honorable sessions of Festus and Agrippa. His plea we have largely set down, from the 1st to the 24th verse: in which he opens his commission, that he had received in an extraordinary manner from heaven, for preaching that doctrine which was everywhere spoken against, and for worshiping God in that way which was called heresy.

I shall not at all enter into the consideration of the apology: but let us look only at the different effects, that it wrought upon the hearers. Festus and Agrippa were both of them unbelievers: the one, an unbelieving heathen; the other, an unbelieving Jew: and thus they both continue.

Yet St. Paul's speech works very differently upon them. In the 24th verse you have Festus raving. He "said with a loud voice, 'Paul, thou art beside thyself, much learning doth make thee mad:' thy thoughts of a vision and an apparition, of a man dead and buried, lying safe under ground, that he should rise again and appear from heaven to thee, being the Saviour of the world, is a mere fancy, proceeding from a strong frenzy:" thus he scoffs and raves. But this very sermon, which seemed madness and an idle tale to unbelieving Festus, carries a strong conviction in it to Agrippa, who was an unbeliever too: "Almost thou persuadest me to be a Christian."

Hence observe, that the word of God hath a far different effect, even upon those upon whom it hath no saving effect. One raves and rages against it, and is seared and stupefied by it: another is convinced and terrified by it. Festus scoffs and mocks, and goes away laughing at the doctrine and reviling the preacher: but Agrippa is convinced, and half persuaded to believe and practise that very doctrine, and highly to esteem the preacher of it.

And is it not so even among us? Are there not many, who may

come to the ordinances in a natural and sinful estate and condition? The same word of God is cast among them all: yea, but what is the success? When the sword of the Spirit is brandished amongst a great crowd of consciences, it is not likely, that it should miss all, and strike none of them: one, perhaps, goes away slighting and contemning; another goes away scoffing and railing against it; and another half-persuaded by it to become a Christian, to be almost a Christian. If every man's breast had a casement in it, by which we might see the inward estuations and boilings of their hearts, how they work after a powerful and terrifying sermon; should we not behold and see some, shifting and shuffling their sins out of the way? some, holding up the bucklers of prejudiced opinions, to ward and fence off the stroke of the Spirit? some, fretting and storming at the lancing of their consciences? some, scorning and scoffing, with Festus, that it is no better than folly and madness? some, trembling with Felix? some, convinced and wrought upon, as Agrippa, to faint resolutions and half-purposes? And, yet, all these remain under the power of unbelief and unregeneracy. It is, indeed, a wonder, that, among such diversity of operations which the world hath upon the souls and consciences of men, it could be possible that such a multitude should go away without any saving operation by it; some, blinded and hardened; some, terrified; some, stupefied; some, exasperated and enraged; some, convinced and half-persuaded, and such are those that we now speak of: such as are, as it were, half of one complexion and half of another, that stick in the new birth, whose hearts have been warmed with good motions, who have entertained approving and admiring thoughts concerning the ways of holiness, who have taken up some resolutions of doing better and of being better; and, yet, do not come off roundly and speedily from their sins, nor close fully with Christ. These are the half-Christians of which the text speaks.

The words are plain in themselves; and, therefore, do not require much explication. Only the word translated ALMOST *thou persuadest me*, &c., if accurately rendered, according to the original, is, A LITTLE *thou persuadest me*, &c. So, in the reply, which St. Paul makes, with a holy kind of gallantry, in the ensuing verse, you find it is opposed to *much*, which we render *altogether*; but the grammatical construction is, *Would to God they were both ALL, AND IN MUCH, such as I am, except these bonds!* So, then, IN A LITTLE, *thou persuadest me*; that is, "I could, methinks, be contented to be a Christian *in a little*, in some few things: some part of the

way I could willingly go," saith Agrippa: but St. Paul concludes, it must not be only *in a little*, but *in much, in all*.

If we follow this sense and interpretation of the words; then observe,

Doct. 1. THERE IS MUCH REQUIRED TO MAKE A TRUE CHRISTIAN; A LITTLE WILL NOT SERVE.

It is not a little will serve: for many precious ingredients go to the making of a true Christian; and much of each ingredient goes to the making of a strong Christian. There must be profession, faith, obedience, self-denial, patience, humility, outward preparation and inward graces, outward embellishments and inward ornaments; and a little of it is but little worth. There are many, that are persuaded to be Christians in name and profession, to be Christians in outward participation of ordinances and communion with saints, and the like: yea, but this is to be a Christian but only in a little. Are you persuaded to obey Christ in all, to take up his cross and deny yourselves, to oppose and mortify your lusts, and to perform the harshest and severest part of religion? This is indeed to be a Christian, not only in a little, but in much; yea, in all, to be such as St. Paul himself was.

But, then, if you take the words according to our translation, which the original also will very well bear; so it is, "within a little or ALMOST thou persuadest me:" for King Agrippa was fully convinced of the truth of those things, which St. Paul related; as you may see, v. 26. He knew these things, and was ignorant of none of them: they were not hidden from him; for these things were not done in a corner. He could not be ignorant of the miraculous conversion of him, who had been so furious and notorious a persecutor of Christians. He, who was expert in all the customs that were among the Jews, v. 3, could not be ignorant of what the Apostle affirms, vv. 22, 23. This, that Moses and the Prophets foretold, that Christ should suffer and be raised from the dead, and should give life to the Gentiles, of all this King Agrippa was fully convinced: and, yet, when St. Paul so insinuatingly presseth upon him, "Believest thou the prophets? I know that thou believest," the result of all is this, that he was but almost persuaded, not fully persuaded of the truth of what St. Paul speaks concerning Christ, concerning himself, and concerning Christians; yet, for all that, he was but almost persuaded to be a Christian. Hence, likewise, observe,

Doct. 2. THAT PERSONS, WHO ARE FULLY AND TRULY CONVINCED, ARE MANY TIMES BUT ALMOST AND HALF-PERSUADED.

There may be a powerful persuasion in the judgment and the conscience concerning Christ and his ways, when there is but half a persuasion in the will and affections to close with them.

These observations I gather up, as they lie strewed in my passage. I shall not insist upon them, but only as they are subservient to the fuller prosecution of the general doctrine, which you may take thus :

Doct. 3. THAT THOSE, WHO NEVER WERE IN CHRIST, YET MAY BE ALMOST CHRISTIANS.

I need not here stand to tell you, that Christianity may be taken either,

First. For an outward profession of Christ, as it is opposed to all other religions in the world, whether heathenish idolatry, Mahometan stupidity, or Jewish ceremony : or,

Secondly. For an inward and cordial embracing of Jesus Christ, thus professed, as it stands opposed, either to the profaneness or hypocrisy of carnal gospellers.

Evident it is, that the Christianity into which Agrippa was almost persuaded, was of the first sort ; not excluding the second.

Nay, it was seldom seen, that, in those primitive times, wherein no carnal respect or outward advantage could commend the gospel to the interests of men, when the reward of professing Christ was persecution and martyrdom ; then, I say, it was seldom seen, that any would take Christ by profession, who would not also take him by faith and adherence : few there were, that would take up religion, even upon this condition, to lay down their lives for Christ ; who yet, through their own profaneness or hypocrisy, were to receive no benefit from the death of Christ : so that, to persuade men then to be Christians in profession, was the same with persuading them to be Christians in reality. But now, when the name of Christ is so much courted, when the denying of Christ would be repaid with the same punishment that formerly the owning of Christ underwent, you need not so much persuasion to take upon you the outward profession of Christianity : for you are not only *almost*, but *altogether* Christians, in the external garb ; but our persuasion to you must be, that, as you own Christ in an out-

ward profession of him, so you would cleave to him by a true faith in him and obedience to him.

We are not, then, to speak to Pagans, to convert them to a new religion; but, if I may so say, we are to speak to Christian infidels, to convert them to a new life and conversation. Nor yet, among these, doth my subject lead me to the profane and looser sort; whose being called Christians, doth not more honor them, than they disgrace and reproach that holy name: but to those, who are more elevated and more refined; who go far in Christianity, so as to be near the kingdom of God; in a word, such as are *almost* Christian; and yet are strangers to Christ, and remain in their sinful state and unregenerate condition.

In the prosecution of this point, I shall inquire into these following particulars, in this method:

What progress men may make towards Christianity, and yet fall short of it.

Whence they are enabled to proceed so far; and what it is, that carries them out to all their attainments.

What it is, that hinders them from proceeding further, and, when they are *almost* Christians, what keeps them from being such *altogether*.

To show you the folly and misery of those, who proceed thus far only, as to be almost Christians, and no farther.

I. Let us see WHAT PROGRESS A NATURAL MAN MAY MAKE TOWARDS GRACE AND CHRISTIANITY, AND YET REMAIN IN A SINFUL STATE.

i. Before I can come, in particular, to determine this, I must PREMISE these three particulars.

1. That when we inquire what progress an unregenerate man may make towards grace, this *supposes that there is a tendency in what such a man doth or may do, towards the obtaining of grace*: or how else can he make any progress towards it, if that, which he doth, hath no tendency to it?

Let us, therefore, inquire what kind of a tendency this is.

There may be a twofold tendency supposed in the actions of an unregenerate man, towards the acquisition of grace.

(1) Actions may be said to have an *effective* tendency, when they do, by their own efficiency and causality, produce that, which they tend to.

And, in this sense, it must be denied that the actions of an unregenerate man have any tendency towards grace: be their pro-

gress what it will, thereby he cannot efficiently produce or cause grace in himself: and, therefore, grace is called the new creature, as being the effect only of creating power, which is the sole prerogative of God; and it is as utterly impossible for a man to create grace in the soul, as to create the soul itself.

Take but this one demonstration to evince it. If an unregenerate man, by his own power and efficiency, can produce grace in himself, then one of these two gross absurdities must needs follow: either, that there are still left holy habits and principles in the will, which were never lost by the fall of man; or, that a man may make himself truly holy, by a will that is totally corrupt and sinful. Either of these is very gross, for

[1] There are no holy nor divine habits left in the will of a carnal man, whereby he should be able to regenerate and convert himself.

For what holy habit can there be in the will of one, that is wholly corrupted? If any such be supposed, it may also be supposed that it is true grace: and, to affirm that a man, in a state of nature, hath true grace inherent in him, whereby he is able to convert and regenerate himself, is double nonsense and a flat contradiction; for it is to affirm, that he hath grace before he hath it.

[2] A will, totally corrupted, cannot make a holy man, cannot produce grace, nor make a man holy.

Grace is beyond and above its sphere. The motions of the will in its fallen estate, through defect of a right principle from whence they flow and a right end to which they tend, are all evil and sinful: and it is very strange to affirm, that a gracious habit may be wrought in us by sinful actions. And, besides, the will of man, by the fall, is a fleshly will; but, in regeneration, it is made spiritual: now it were a strange kind of production, if fleshly could beget spiritual; nor would it any longer hold true, that our Saviour saith in John iii. 6: *That, which is born of the flesh, is flesh.* So that I think it is very evident, that all that a man can do by the power of nature cannot tend efficiently to produce grace in him.

(2) There is a *subjective* tendency towards grace.

And this lies in those moral preparations, and those dispositions of the heart, which fit it for the receiving of grace, though it be wrought there only by the Holy Ghost. And thus we affirm, that, while men are in an unregenerate state, they may have and do somewhat that hath a tendency in it to grace: that is, one unregenerate man may have more of these previous dispositions, and of

these preparations for receiving grace, than another hath: for, though it be not in itself singly necessary that such previous dispositions should be wrought in the soul before the implantation of divine grace; since such a subject, as the soul is in respect of grace, doth not, as the school men determine, require its previous disposition for the production of its form; yet this is the usual common way of the Spirit's work, first to prepare the heart by some common works of conviction, legal terrors and remorse of conscience, before it works any saving and real work of grace in it. And, therefore, when any unregenerate man hath much of these previous preparations, we say that he goes very far towards grace, and he may be said to be almost a Christian. And this is all that tendency, that an unregenerate man hath, or can possibly do towards it: viz. a preparatory, and not an effective, operative tendency unto saving grace and regeneration.

2. Another thing premised is this: That, *through willful sloth and wretched negligence, no unregenerate man doth make so great a progress towards grace as he is able and can possibly do.*

None go so far as they can do, in those previous preparations and dispositions towards it. When they find difficulty in opposing temptation, in crucifying their lusts, in performing duties, in denying their sinful delights and pleasures, having nothing supernatural within them to naturalize and facilitate these things and carry them on resolutely through all, they never keep up to the utmost of that power which they have: but, as they yield to those temptations that they might resist, and commit those sins that they might reject, and neglect those duties which for matter and substance of them they might perform; so, none of them go so far as they have a natural power to do. No man goes so far in the work of grace as he might, if he would improve that power which he hath by nature.

3. *Did they make as great a progress towards grace as they might, they would not fall so far short of grace as they do.*

I say, if wicked unregenerate men did but as much as they are able by the power of nature to do, without the special assistance of the Holy Ghost, they would not fall so far short of grace as they do. I would not enter into that dispute, whether God be engaged to bestow grace upon the right improvement of their natural power; yet, it is certain, and agreed on by all, that he doth certainly do so. God usually bestows true and saving grace upon those, who do rightly and to their utmost improve their natural power and ability for the acquiring of it. If God be not obliged, by

promise, to assist them; yet, through his goodness and mercy, he is not wont to desert them. Let them but labor to improve their natural ability to the utmost strain and pitch, that their own capacity can elevate, God will, according to his usual method and wonted goodness, come in by supernatural grace; and enable them to do that, which by nature they are not able to do: for no instance can be given to the contrary.

So, then, we may conclude, that wicked men never go so far as they can; and did they, yet they could not efficiently work grace in themselves: but, nevertheless, they would be disposed and prepared for the receipt of grace; which God, upon such preparations, would undoubtedly bestow upon them. For, although he be not obliged to give it them; yet, usually, he is wont to work it in them merely through his own natural goodness, free grace and mercy to them, pitying the weakness of their lapsed and fallen nature.

ii. I shall proceed to answer the first question, IN THE GENERAL.

Unregenerate men may make a great progress, and may go very far towards grace, and yet fall short of it: that, in general, is to be almost a Christian. This I laid down in the method propounded to you. Although I say not that they go so far as they can by the power of nature, and yet fall short of grace; for that can never be instanced in any: yet the sad and wretched apostasy of those, who have been eminent professors, shining yea and glaring lights, exceeding and also despising common attainments of others, hath too evidently confirmed it to us, that men may go very far towards grace, and yet fall short of it. See what Christ saith, Mark xii. 34, of that young man, that forward young man, *Thou art not far from the kingdom of God*: that is, thou art not far from grace; for so the kingdom of God is oftentimes taken in Scripture for the kingdom of grace: so that we may say of such men, they were not far from the kingdom of God, not far from grace, not far from heaven; climbing up almost thither, within view and ken of it, having one foot, as it were, upon the threshold of the heavenly gate; and, yet, even these tumble headlong, and never rest until they have plunged themselves to the bottom of hell. It is with such men, as it is with the vapors, that are drawn up into the air: they shine with the same light, with the same apparent magnitude as the fixed stars themselves do; and we may think them moving in the very same sphere with them; but, when we see them dart

down to the earth, and spill all that light and glory which they glistened with by the way, and fall into a filthy jelly, a thicker and more loathsome substance than when they were first exhaled, we then conclude that all that elevation of those false and blazing lights was vastly short of that heaven, in which they seemed sometime to be fixed. So is it with many unregenerate men; you cannot tell with what they are freighted, till you see them shipwrecked: then it is a sign, that, though they were never right and true treasure, yet they are something very like it: when we see them tumbling down off a glorious profession through fatal precipices of great, gross, and desperate sins, we may sadly conclude that that man was not far from the kingdom of God, though he was never yet there.

Indeed, every unregenerate man, when he winds up himself to the highest pitch and strain, may be said to be far from the kingdom of God, in respect to his total deprivation of grace: though his actions be never so fair and specious, yet they are very far from being gracious; as far as darkness is from light.

Yet he may be said not to be far from the kingdom of God, likewise, in a fourfold respect.

1. In that *he is far from that, which is farthest from grace*: and that is gross, flagitious, and notorious sins, which are farthest off from grace of all others; and from these a natural man may be very far and free, and therefore not far from grace.

2. *He may have that, which very much resembles and counterfeits grace*: so that, as to outward appearance, there is but very little dissimilitude discernible between them: now that, which is like another, may be said not to be far from that, which it is like.

3. He may be said not to be far from grace, because, as I told you before, in the ordinary works of the Spirit upon his soul, *he may have those preparations and dispositions laid in them, which usually are previous and antecedent to grace*, because these are wrought usually before grace; and therefore the person, that hath these wrought upon him, may be said not to be far from grace.

4. He may be said not to be far from grace, because, *if he did proceed but a little farther, he would possibly attain to true grace*. Had such but improved their natural power to such a degree farther, God would have come in with power supernatural; and have wrought that true and saving principle in their lives, which would have been sure to have brought them to eternal life. Grace, indeed, hath such a kind of dependence upon that which is natural: and that dependence is not so much of causality, as of

order and consequence: which, though it be not necessary, yet is commonly granted on all hands.

Thus then, in general, I have shown you that unregenerate men may go far, yea very far towards grace. A man may be almost a Christian, and yet be out of Christ; be near the kingdom of heaven, and yet not in it; and, possibly, be forever excluded and shut out of it.

iii. I shall proceed to the next thing propounded. As we have seen, in general; so now let us consider, *IN PARTICULAR*, what progress a natural man may make towards grace.

And that I shall do, by considering the several steps and degrees by which he may rise to a great height and glory of outward profession.

And this we cannot better do, than by showing what grace is.

What resemblance that, which is wrought by a mere carnal man, may carry in it like true grace.

By comparing these together, we may see how near an unregenerate, carnal man may come to true and saving grace.

1. What *grace* is. I need not tell you, that I speak not now of an objective grace, inherent in God; but terminated on us, whereby a change is wrought in our relation to him: and this objective grace is nothing else, but the divine love, favor, and good will of God expressed in us. But I speak of a subjective grace, inherent in us; whereby a real change is made in our lives and natures. And, in brief, you may take this description of subjective or inherent grace: It is a supernatural habit, immediately infused into the soul by the Holy Ghost, residing in every power and faculty of the soul as a principle of holy and spiritual operation. And there is a fivefold change wrought by it: upon the judgment, or the direct understanding, by informing and enlightening it; upon the conscience, in the reflex understanding, by awakening and pacifying it; upon the affections, by spiritualizing them; upon the will, by converting it; upon the life and conversation, by reforming them. This fivefold change is wrought upon the whole soul by the true and sanctifying grace.

2. Now, in the next place, I shall show *how far a natural man may attain to these, so as to be almost a Christian*.

(1) As for his mind or understanding, he may be irradiated with a clear and sparkling knowledge of divine and spiritual objects, when yet the soul is not truly converted to God.

It is true, as in the creation of the world, the light is numbered

and reckoned amongst the first of God's works ; so likewise, in this new creation, the first work of the Spirit of God is to shed abroad his heavenly light in the understanding : and, therefore, we have this first in order, in that commission, which our Saviour Jesus Christ gives to St. Paul, Acts xxvi. 18. He sent him to the Gentiles, "To open their eyes, and to turn them from darkness to light ; and," then it follows, "from the power of Satan unto God." But, notwithstanding, there is an illumination about spiritual things, which may gild and beautify the understanding of a natural man : who, like a toad, may be full of poison, though he hath a precious stone in his head. The Apostle lays down this as one of those attainments that an unregenerate man may have, and yet be an apostate : Heb. vi. 4. He may not only have a deep knowledge of gospel mysteries, so as to see the whole system and connection of the doctrines of Christ, and to unfold them to others ; but may have also particular discoveries of the glory and beauty that there is in these things. We may see it clearly by Balaam's ecstasy, Numb. xxiv. 5. Such discoveries carnal hearts may have made to them, and see their luster and beauty. Nay, further, a carnal man may be convinced, that there is no other way of recovery but by the grace of God through the merits of Christ, of the suitableness of Christ to his soul, of the freeness of God's love, of the riches of his grace, of the readiness of his heart to receive him, of the desirableness of happiness, and of the beauty of holiness ; and yet, for all this, remain in a natural state.

But now, not to leave you under doubts and perplexities, such an illumination of a carnal man falls far short of true grace in these two particulars.

[1] In that it is but lumen sterile, a barren light.

Illumination, that is saving, is not only light, but influence too. As the light of the sun doth not serve only to paint the world, and varnish over the beauty and variety of the several creatures that are in it ; but carries in it a grateful heat and cherishing influence, which penetrate and refresh them ; and, as the light discovers their beauty, so these influences increase it : so, saving illumination not only illustrates the soul by its light ; but, likewise, by the congeniality of its influences, nourishes the soul, draws sap into it and fruit from it. Such is not the illumination of an unregenerate man : it is but a barren light, and only serves to paint his understanding ; and hath no influence on it, to make the soul grow in grace, and bring forth the fruits of holiness, to the praise of God.

[2] It is an ineffectual, idle light.

That illumination, that is saving, is transforming; 2 Cor. iii. 18: "We all, with open face beholding as in a glass the glory of the Lord, are changed into the same image, &c." If a beam of the sun fall upon a looking-glass, it not only makes it glitter with a glorious light, but it represents the very image of the sun in the glass; but, let it beat never so clearly and strongly upon a mud-wall, though it enlighten it, yet it doth not thereby leave its image upon it: so, truly, illumination, that is saving, doth not only irradiate, but transform. If you look upon the sun when shining in its strength, the light thereof will imprint the very shape and image of the sun upon your eye; and, look where you will, still you retain the appearance of the sun before you: so, every sight that a true Christian hath of the Sun of Righteousness, will make as it were another sun in his soul. But the illumination of wicked men doth only enlighten, not change them: their understandings may be irradiated with glorious discoveries of God, and of Christ, and the things of heaven; but this doth not transform them into the image and likeness of those things. The illumination of godly men and true Christians is like the light, which breaks through the air, and turns every vast body throughout the world all into light. It is with wicked, unregenerate men, as with those that lie long in the sunshine; which, though it enlightens them, yet doth but afterwards make them more black and swarthy: so, thou mayest have as much notional knowledge of God, and Christ, and the mysteries of the gospel, as any child of God hath, and possibly much more: yet this is no true sign of grace; for this knowledge is not therefore saving because it is clear and comprehensive, but because it is influential and transforming. And, usually, we perceive, that where the light of knowledge shines into a wicked heart, it doth but tan and make the person more black and swarthy; more sinful, than before.

Thus, as to the direct understanding of the judgment, a natural man may have a bright, clear, and glittering light concerning heavenly and spiritual objects.

(2) As for the reflex understanding of the conscience: neither yet the peace nor the trouble of conscience, is such an attainment as a natural man cannot reach.

[1] A natural man may have a quiet and peaceable conscience.

Indeed, when this peace is true, it is always an effect of grace; and therefore we thus find them coupled together, Rom. i. 7; 1 Cor. i. 3: yet there is that, which looks very like peace of conscience,

though it be not such; and that is a supine presumption and a carnal stupidity and callousness: their consciences are never troubled at the sight of sin or the sense of wrath; but they are like those presumptuous sinners spoken of, Deut. xxix. 19: "And it come to pass, when he heareth the words of this curse, that he bliss himself in his heart, saying, I shall have peace, though I walk in the imagination of mine heart." Now this peace is founded only upon bold and confident persuasions of God's infinite mercy and gracious disposition: and, because God will exalt his mercy above all his name, therefore they conclude, that, as God hath exalted his power in creating and sustaining them, so he will much more exalt his mercy in saving them. Thus, as madmen often fancy themselves kings or some great personages, when indeed they are but wretched and miserable spectacles; so do these spiritual madmen: and, as the devil appropriates to himself all the glory of the earth, so these look upon heaven, and all the glory of it, and boldly call it all their own; yea, and, through their wretched security, are bold to cry out with St. Thomas, "My Lord and my God." To such I may say, with our Saviour in another case, God "is not the God of the dead, but of the living:" God is not the God of such, as love and live in their sins and lusts; and that call him Father, whom yet they dishonor by a lewd and dissolute life. This is but to father one of the devil's offspring upon the Holy God. Indeed men, by enormous and flagitious crimes, have so wounded and wasted their consciences, that now they retain not strength enough to accuse, molest, and trouble them; and this they call peace of conscience: such a peace, as Gallicus (in Tacitus) upbraids the Romans with: when they have laid all waste, this they call peace: but this peace is rather deadness of conscience; and is far from that, which ariseth from the true grace of God. The Holy Ghost, in conviction, destroys this ill-grounded peace; and works in the soul horrors and terrors, and affrights the secure soul, when it shows it how it slept upon the top of the mast, and lay on the very brink of the infernal pit. As, therefore, we must not discourage a broken spirit, but embolden it to appropriate Christ and all the promises of the Gospel to itself in particular: so we must let wicked men know, that, when they presume to call God, their God and their Father, and yet continue in their sins and wickedness, they will find, that, instead of being their Father, he will only be their Judge. Now it will appear that this peace of a carnal man is only from deep security, and the spirit of slumber that hath seized upon them: because, when we come to examine the grounds of it, they

plead only the goodness of their hearts, and there is nothing more familiar and frequent than this of which they boast; and, though they live in a constant neglect of holy duties, and wallow in the filth of customary sins, yet still they boast of this, that they have very good hearts, upright intentions. This is a mere delusion; for it is as utterly impossible, that the heart should be good when the life is wicked and profane, as for a good root to bring forth evil and corrupt fruit.

[2] As peace of conscience may be attained by natural men, so, many times, such may lie under the regrets and troubles of conscience.

It is not trouble of conscience, that is the attainment wherein true grace doth consist. A dull and lethargic conscience, that hath long lain under the customary commission of gross sins, may at length by strong convictions be startled and awakened to a sense of sin, and be afraid at the sight of it; but yet may remain an impure and defiled conscience. God may, even in this life, kindle in their breasts some sparks of the unquenchable fire, and may give them some foretastes of that cup of trembling of which they must forever drink: as he hath made himself a devil incarnate by his sin, so God may make his conscience a hell incarnate. By his conscience, you hear Cain, that primitive reprobate, crying out, "My punishment is greater than I can bear:" Gen. iv. 13; nor could Judas find any other way to check his conscience, but with a halter. These regrets of conscience may proceed from a preparatory work of conviction, which, because of men's willful deserting them, often vanish away without any saving effect; and fall as far short of true grace, as the region of the air, where storms, tempests, thunderings, and lightnings are engendered, falls short of the heaven of the blessed, and that eternal calmness and serenity. And, as worms usually are the offspring of corruption and putrefaction; so this never dying worm, that must ever sting them, oftentimes in this life, is bred out of a rotten and corrupted conscience. The conscience, therefore, may be defiled, when it is not seared: it may be awakened, when it is not sanctified: a filthy puddle may be stirred, as well as a clear running stream: the conscience may work terrors and horrors, where the Spirit of God never wrought true saving grace.

(3) As to the affections: there may be affections and sweet motions of the heart, which are oftentimes relied on as certain evidences of true grace, yet also may be in a carnal and natural man.

Some received "the word with joy," Mat. xiii. 20: so Christ

tells the Jews, that they did for a season rejoice in the doctrine and preaching of John the Baptist, John v. 35: thus Herod is said to hear John gladly. So that you see the affections in holy duties and ordinances may be with joy, even in those, that have no true grace at all in them. As there may be these affections of joy and delight, so likewise of sorrow for sin; so we have it, Mat. xxvii. 3: it is said of Judas, he "repented himself;" and Ahab's humiliation was so great, that God took special notice of him, "seest thou how Ahab humbleth himself before me," 1 Kings xxi. 29.

Now all these affections are but temporary and vanishing; and may be excited, even in carnal men, from several advantages, that things have to commend themselves, to their judgments and to their hearts.

[1] Sometimes, the very novelty and strangeness of them may affect us.

Novelty usually breeds delight, which longer custom and acquaintance doth abate. And this may be given as a reason, why, soon after conversion, the new converts' affections are drawn forth more strongly in the ways of God, than, afterwards, when they grow settled and stable Christians; the reason is, because of the very novelty of that course and way into which they have now entered, which affects them with delight: besides the real desirableness, which is in those ways themselves, the very novelty doth affect them. And this too may satisfy us, that, though many are turned aside from the truth as it is in Jesus Christ and from the way of worship which God hath appointed us, who have boasted, that they have found more comfort and more sweet affections than ever, in those new ways after which they have gone; yet it is not because those ways have any thing in them that might yield them more comfort and delight, but only because they are new ways. and all new things will for the present stir up the affections: but, after some continuance in those ways, they find their joy and delight to flag: then they seek out other new ways, and commend them as much: and no wonder; for new ways will stir up new affections. That may be one reason, why affections may be stirred up, even in unregenerate and mere carnal men, as to the things of God, even from the mere novelty of them.

[2] Good affections may be stirred up in men, from the very affecting nature of spiritual objects themselves.

For spiritual objects may affect us in this natural way. Who can read the history of Christ's passion, without being affected with sorrow for all the sorrow that he underwent? He hath a

heart harder than rocks, that can hear of the agonies, and scourges, and cruel indignities offered to so innocent and excellent a person as Christ was, that suffered even for sinners, and not be moved thereby to grief and compassion. And yet, possibly, these affections may be no other than such as would be excited from us, at the reading of some tragedy in a romance or feigned story.

[3] Affections may be moved by the artificial rhetoric of others, by the great abilities of the ministers, whom we hear.

God tells the prophet Ezekiel, chap. xxxiii. 32: "Thou art unto them as a very lovely song." They may sometimes have their judgments pleased with the learning shown in a sermon; and their affections excited by the oratory, and powerful utterance of it: but these, though they are very good helps to excite our affections, yet are not true tests of spiritual affections in us.

[4] Pride and self-seeking may, in the performance of duties, excite our affections.

Men may be much deceived in this particular. For instance, in prayer, they may think they are affected with the things they pray for: when, possibly, their affections may be moved only with the words themselves spoken; with the copious, free, and admirable inventive way in which they pray: whereas the contrite broken spirit, who is only moved with truly spiritual affections, may not be so large and so copious in his expressions of them: a true Christian may groan out a prayer, who cannot compose and make a prayer, that hath a sententious coherence one part with another. As the ground, that is fullest of precious mines, hath least grass growing upon it; so, sometimes, in holy duties, when the heart is most full of grace, there may be least flourishing of expressions.

You cannot gather the truth of saving grace from strong workings of the affections; which may, sometimes, upon these accounts be deceitful. And wicked and unregenerate men may have affections stirred up in them, upon these grounds: but, then, they are always vanishing and fleeting; and are only permanent, while the violence of some external cause doth excite them. And they are always unfruitful: though their affections may stir within them, yet they are not efficacious to put them upon a holy life and conversation.

(4) Every change, that is wrought upon the will, is no certain evidence of the truth of grace.

A man may fall short of true saving grace, when there is yet a great change wrought upon the will. It is true, it is the thorough change of the will, wherein grace doth principally consist. This

is the first principal act from the Spirit of Life; without which whatsoever other change is wrought upon us, is no more than to set the hand of the watch to the right hour when the spring is broken. The Philosophers call the will, the commanding, swaying faculty of the soul; that controls all the inferior faculties, and makes them obey its inclinations: so that, such as the will is, such is the whole man. And, therefore, the Scripture, in setting forth the twofold state of men, doth it by showing the temper of their wills. Unregenerate men are described by their willfulness: "Ye will not come to me, that ye might have life." John v. 40. The people of God are described by their willingness; Ps. cx. 3: "Thy people shall be willing in the day of thy power."

And here I shall endeavor two things.

To show you after what manner the spirit of God doth work this renewing change upon the will.

To show you what other change is wrought upon it, which falls short of true grace, though oftentimes it is taken for it.

[1] For the first, we must know that there are two ways, whereby God doth effectually change the heart and will of a sinner: and these are moral suasions; and physical determinations, which are nothing else but God's all-powerful grace, whereby he doth immediately turn the bent and inclination of the will towards himself.

And both these do always concur and agree to this great change. He doth first convince a sinner and persuade him of the reasonableness of the ways of God; and of the vileness and emptiness of those vain things, which his desires so eagerly pursue: and, on the other hand, he clearly represents the glory and excellence of himself and his ways; that he is the greatest good that we can enjoy; and yet there is no other way to enjoy him, but by loving and serving him. To do this, he makes use of moral suasions; and works upon our reasons, by cogent and prevailing arguments; which, at last, diffuseth such heavenly sweetness through the heart of a Christian, as makes him disrelish those fulsome delights of sin, that separate from that infinite good, with which it holds comparison: so that he finds more true delight in God and his ways, and more alluring and charming joy in them, than ever he did before in sensual pleasure: we are thereby carried forth unto them by an infallible, yet altogether free, voluntary, and amorous motion. And this is done by the real efficiency likewise of the Spirit of God upon the will: and this efficiency is so sweetly attuned to the native liberty of the will, that it would be a pain and tor-

ment to the soul to be separated from that God, whom now his understanding doth apprehend, and about whom his will doth clasp, as the real and chief good. Here, you see, are both moral suasions and physical determinations of the will to the work of grace. God doth really determine it, by the efficacious touch of his grace; whereby he powerfully turns the bent and inclination of it to himself, which before stood towards sin and vanity. And, that this might not infringe the will's prerogative of acting freely, he doth at the same time morally persuade it, by representing himself as the best and most satisfying object of it. Notwithstanding, then, the irresistibleness of God's working upon the will; yet, still, man's will is free in God's working of grace, which some have thought to be an irreconcilable difference. For the freedom of the will doth not consist in redoubled pure acts; for, otherwise, the saints and angels themselves, who are under that blessed necessity that they cannot but love and serve God, would not love him and serve him freely. The liberty of the will consists in an acting upon rational grounds and motives; which, by how much stronger they are, by so much the more they turn the necessity of the will to him, and yet by so much the more the will is free in acting: so that here, that the liberty of the will may not violate the causality of God's purpose, he changeth it by the power of his irresistible grace; and, yet, that this irresistible grace may not violate the liberty of the will, which is its natural privilege, he persuades it by such natural arguments that it could not act freely if it should dissent from them. Though God useth infinite power, yet he useth no violence: he subdues the will, but doth not compel it. This is that victorious grace, that doth not more overcome a sinner's resistance, than it doth his prejudice: it overcomes all oppositions, by its own irresistible power; and it overcomes all prejudices, by its attractive sweetness; and, whenever it brings him to submit to God, it makes him to apprehend that his chief happiness and joy is to do so. And it is the same, that doth afterwards preserve Christians from total apostasy: for, though there be such a constant supply of grace, to keep them that they shall never draw back to perdition; yet, withal, their own freedom is such, that they may if they will: but, when the will ceaseth its freedom, it never inclines but to that, which is most pleasing; and nothing is pleasing to a renewed and sanctified will, so much as that sovereign good, which comprehends in it all other good.

Thus you see how God disposeth of the will of man; changing it, without constraining it; turning it, not forcibly, but infallibly

to himself; when he draws it by the sweet and efficacious operation of his grace.

[2] The second particular is to show you, what other change may be wrought upon the will: which yet falls short of true grace; and may bring a man almost to Christianity, and yet leave him in a natural state and condition.

1st. An unregenerate man may have many faint inclinations and wishings after grace.

When he hears so much spoken of the beauty and excellence of holiness, he is convinced, in his judgment, that those things are true: that without holiness no man shall see the Lord: that though, while he is carnal, spiritual duties are tedious and a burden to him; yet, were he spiritual, they would become more delightful to him, than those very pleasures of sin, which keep him from closing with grace: and that, were he renewed, those very pleasures of sin would become unsavory to him; and that, which now he is afraid to lose if he would turn to conscience, he would not value the loss of. When an unregenerate man, I say, is thus convinced of this, it will make him break out into pangs of affectionate wishing for grace. "Oh, that I were holy and gracious! I wish my heart were changed and renewed. I wish I were better, and could do better." I appeal to every man's conscience, when he hath been convinced of the excellence and desirableness of holiness, whether he hath not breathed forth such wishes as these. When you have seen a Christian, that is eminent and exemplary for piety, have not you wished yourself in his condition; not only in respect of his future reward and glory, but also in respect of his present grace? Have you not wished, that such had been your comeliness and beauty? Have you not wished, not only with Balaam, to "die the death of the righteous, and that your last end might be like his;" but also your life by living righteously? And yet still you continue in the same course and sinful state as formerly! Now such empty desires and idle wishes, an unregenerate man may possibly have: he may wish he were a saint; even as a fond foolish man, according to his idle fancy, may wish that he were an angel. But such wishes do not put him upon a constant attempt and use of the means, whereby he might become such. His wishes and his sighs vanish away together; the one retaining no longer an impression upon his heart, than the other in the air: he runs into the commission of that sin, which with his mouth he wishes he might not commit; and lives in the neglect of holy duties, and yet can wish that he had performed them. Such contradictory

wishes have unregenerate men! they wish themselves holy; and yet are willfully sinful: they wish that they were better; and yet will not endeavor their own amendment.

2dly. An unregenerate man may not rest in these wishes, but he may rise to a resolution.

I say, to some degree of resolution: they resolve many things; that their lusts shall no longer enslave them, that the pleasures of the world shall no longer bewitch them, that the difficulties of religion shall no longer affright them; but that they will break through all, and act like men. And with such generous and ingenuous resolutions as these, men, in their natural estate, may fortify themselves. Grace they know they must have, else they are eternally undone: they know that God hath not been wanting to their endeavors; and they peremptorily resolve, that they will not be wanting to themselves. We may see the same strong resolutions, of those that came to inquire of Jeremiah, chap. xlii. 5, 6: "They said....The Lord be a true and faithful witness between us, if we do not even according to all things for the which the Lord thy God shall send thee to us," &c.; and, yet, none more rebellious and disobedient against God, than these men, that make this remonstrance.

3dly. And, now, notwithstanding these wishes and these resolutions, the will of a natural man falls short of a saving change; and that, usually, in these particulars.

(1st) In that it is a fickle and inconstant will.

Their desires may be sometimes violent and passionate, as if they would take heaven by force, and wrest mercy out of the hands of God: their prayers may be importunate and earnest, as if they would take no denial: but this violent spirit is soon spent, and this full bent of their souls soon flags, and returns again, as formerly, ever and anon into the commission of some foul and gross sins. Such a will as this, though at first it hurries them apace, yet is soon tired, and leaves them short of grace and heaven. The Christian race is not to be run by so many fits, but by a constant course and progress; still getting ground upon our lusts; still approaching nearer to the kingdom of heaven. But it is with such men, as it is with the sea, when a spring-tide covers all the shore: when it ebbs, it discovers nothing but sands, where before was nothing but deep water. So, these affected and flowing Christians discover, that there is nothing but barren sands at the bottom; and that they are as unstable as water. A Christian is not made in a fit: neither is the work of grace wrought in a

passion; but it is a settled, solemn, and constant frame of heart, that brings a man to Christ and salvation.

(2dly) The will of an unregenerate man is never universally changed: still he reserves to himself some lust or other, that he will not part withal.

Their resolutions, concerning their sins, are such as the resolution of Naaman the Assyrian; 2 Kings v. 18: "In this thing, the Lord pardon thy servant, that when my master goeth into the house of Rimmon to worship there, and he leaneth on my hand, and I bow myself in the house of Rimmon, the Lord pardon thy servant in this thing." So, men may be peremptory in their resolutions to forsake their sins; yet still there may be some one dear lust or other, that makes them cry, with Naaman, *Lord, pardon thy servant in this thing*: they will be willing to receive Christ, if they may be allowed in one darling sin. Now the partition, that any one sin makes between Christ and the soul, must needs hinder the soul from closing with Christ: as, if you throw but any little thing between the branch and the stock that it is engrafted into, the sap will never be communicated to it, and so it will never grow up to be a plant.

(3dly) The will of an unregenerate man is usually unreasonable.

It would obtain the end; and yet not use the means. Grace, possibly, they would have; but they cannot bring their averse wills to close with the performance of those unpleasing and irksome duties, wherein God usually bestows grace, and by which he conveys grace to the soul. Could they be holy with a wish, and a sudden fancy that enflames them, then none should be better Christians than themselves: could they enter into heaven by being willing, none then should shine above them in glory: but, when there is so much hard and unpleasing work, first that they must be born of God; and, after they are true Christians, that they must exercise every grace and perform every duty that may fit and prepare them for glory; they look upon these things as too difficult, which makes them sit down with idle wishes short both of grace and glory. Their wills are very unreasonable: they would have heaven; but they slight grace, the way to it: and, possibly, they would have grace: but they cannot bring themselves to the performance of those irksome and unpleasing duties, in and by which grace is usually bestowed and conveyed.

(4thly) The will of an unregenerate man is usually a general, not a particular will.

If God should ask them, "Sinners, what would you do to be

saved?" they would answer, "Any thing, every thing." But let God bid them leave such and such a sin, perform such and such a duty, they answer with Naaman, "Any sin, but that; any duty, but that." So it is with these men: "Oh, any thing," in the general: but, when God brings them down to particulars, to do this or that, then they are willing to do just nothing.

I have shown you how far the will itself may be changed in unregenerate persons: they may wish after grace, and resolve to be better, and to do better; and yet fall short of saving grace. And, also, what it is that hinders this change from being a thorough work of grace; what it is that obstructs them, when they are *almost*, that they are not *altogether* Christians.

(5) As for the life and conversation.

There may be a great change wrought in the lives of unregenerate persons, who yet fall short of Christianity.

The Apostle, 2 Pet. ii. 20, speaks of such who having "escaped the pollutions of the world," through lust were "again entangled therein and overcome," &c. It seems, to escape the pollutions of the world is no argument of true grace, unless they be also cleansed from the pollutions of the heart: for sin may be left merely from external and forced principles; such as terrors of conscience, for the heavy judgments of God; when God sets up a flaming sword, between a sinner and those sins, which he accounts his paradise here. Now to leave sin upon such a strait as this, is to leave it with a great deal of reluctance: as when a mariner in a storm, casts his goods overboard into the sea: it is with his will indeed; but it is with an unwilling willingness: he is frightened and terrified to it. So, when the soul is tossed with the tempest of divine wrath; and when ready to be split upon the rock of ages, and be sunk and swallowed up in a sea of fire and brimstone; he is forced to light himself, and to cast this and that dear lust overboard; this he doth from his will: but it is such a forced will, as that of mariners, who throw their treasure overboard; and, as soon as the tempest is over, the one gathers up his floating wrecks, and the other his sins. These men leave their sin, as Lot's wife left Sodom: they dare no longer continue in it, lest fire and brimstone rain upon them; and, yet, when they do leave it, they give many a wishful look back again, and have strong and vehement desires after it. That reformation of life, that only frees us from excesses, falls far short of true Christianity, and of making us altogether Christians: this is that, with which many soothe themselves, when they reflect upon the wild extravagances of their former time: how outrageously

wicked they have been, riotous, drunkards, unclean, blasphemers; and, now that they find themselves deadened to these sins, and grown men of staid and sober lives, they straightway conclude, that, certainly, this great change could never be made on them otherwise than by the renewing work of the Holy Ghost: and, yet, in this amendment there may be no work of regeneration; for men may gather up their loose and dissolute lives within some compass of civility and morality, and yet be utterly strangers to this work. Much of this may be ascribed, partly to convictions of God's Spirit, awakening natural conscience to see the horror and danger of such daring and outrageous sins; and, partly, too, to prudence, gotten from frequent experience of manifold inconveniences that they brought upon themselves by such sins: and both these convictions and moral prudence are principles, that fall very far short of true Christianity. Usually, all the specious reformation and amendment of these men's lives, is, in effect, either a changing of the sin, or a tiring out of the sinner.

[1] The life may seem to be reformed, when men exchange their rude and boisterous sins, for such as are more demure and sober.

From riotous, they grow worldly: from profane and irreligious, they grow superstitious and hypocritical: from atheists, they grow heretics: from sins of practice, to sins of contemplation. They are, then, apt to think, that, certainly, this change must needs be the change of their nature, when indeed it is but the change of their sins; and usually it is such a change too, that, though it render the life more inoffensive, yet it makes the soul more incurable. St. Austin, in his 29th Epistle, tells us, that vices may give place, when virtue or grace does not take it.

[2] The life may seem to be reformed, when men are only tired out; when they have outgrown their sins.

There are sins, which are proper and peculiar to such a state and season of a man's life, upon the alteration of which they vanish and disappear. Sins of youth drop off from declining age, as unbecoming them. Now this deceives men: when they look back to the vanities which they have forsaken, how deadened they are to those sinful ways which before they much delighted in, they conclude, certainly, this great change must needs proceed from true grace; when they do not leave their sins, so much as their sins leave them, and drop off from them as rotten fruit from a tree: the faculties of their minds and the members of their bodies, which before were instruments of sin and unrighteousness, are now become instruments of morality and seeming virtues: this sets them not free from the

service of sin; but only restrains them from breaking out into notorious and scandalous vices.

[3] A civil and harmless demeanor doth not render a man altogether a Christian.

There be many ingenuous spirits, who live blamelessly in the world; their good natures nearly resembling grace. And such was St. Paul's, before his conversion: for he tells us, as "touching.... the law," he was "blameless." So, the young man, that came to Christ to know what lesson he had further to take out. This only argues a sweet disposition, but not a gracious heart. Thus you see how dissolute men may mistake themselves in this work, upon which their eternal happiness depends. It is to be feared, that many may rest upon these; and think the great discriminating change to be wrought, only because they are morally honest, or gained over to a profession of truth, or to such a party or sect of professors; when, indeed, true Christianity consists not in these things.

iv. I shall close up this branch with some PRACTICAL CONSIDERATIONS.

Use 1. What then shall become of such, as fall short of those that fall short of grace, that are not so much as almost Christians? What will become of carnal, loose, and profane sinners?

If those, that have been gazed at and admired for burning and shining lights, yet have fallen into the blackness of darkness, even into the dungeon of eternal darkness, were we but serious in this reflection, it would make all our faces gather blackness, and fill all our hearts with astonishment, to consider that we are not gone so far in Christianity as those may go, who yet fall short of heaven. Have we all been enlightened? Have we all tasted of the heavenly gift, and of the powers of the world to come? Have we all been made partakers of the Holy Ghost? Are there not many among us, possibly, whose hearts have never yet been touched with the sense of sin, never affected with any of the ways of God? Many that give themselves up to all wickedness with greediness? Many who never have given so much as one serious wish towards holiness? When those, that seemed to shine as stars in heaven, shall be at last burning in hell, oh, in what a dismal case shall these firebrands be!

Use 2. Hence, likewise, See what a difficult thing it is to be a true Christian.

May a natural man attain to all this, that I have spoken of

before? We may then take up that same question, which the disciples asked Christ, (when he had told them, that it was as easy "for a camel to go through a needle's eye, as for a rich man to enter into the kingdom of God,") Lord, "who then can be saved?" Mat. xix. 24-26. "What! may those, whose profession hath been eminent, who have been sainted in every man's calendar, may they at last miscarry and perish? Who then shall be saved? If such be not Christians, Christianity seems to be rather some fancied notion, than any thing real and attainable." To this we may make the same answer, that Christ gave to the disciples: "With men," indeed, these things are "impossible, but with God all things are possible:" it is impossible for men, by their own strength and natural ability, to become Christians; but it is possible for God to make them Christians: it is possible, as miracles themselves are possible, only possible to the Almighty power of God. Not any soul can be persuaded to be a Christian, but he hath a miracle wrought upon him: and he himself must do that, which is little less than a miracle; he must act beyond the power of nature, and do more than a mere man can do: therefore, well may you suspect your Christianity, who find it so easy a matter to be a Christian. Even natural men find it a difficult task to attain to that height and pitch, where they shine in moral virtues, though far short of heaven; and is it easy for you to mount far higher than they, far beyond them? Indeed it is an easy matter for any to make a slight formal profession, to run in a round of hypocritical duties, and live a moral, civil life: this is easy: there is nothing miraculous in this. But is it easy to pluck out the right-eye, and to cut off the right-hand? It is not easy, to crucify a darling lust; to cut off the right-hand, when it lifts up itself to plead for mercy, and to be spared a little longer; to pluck out the right-eye, when it drops tears to beg compassion, and a little favor to be granted to it. Is it easy, to combat with principalities and powers, to baffle devils, and despise the scorns and affronts of the whole world? Is it easy, to live like an angel? nay to live like Christ, to live like God himself? Is this easy? When we see so many tottering professors aspiring towards Christianity, some mounting till they are giddy and brain-sick with their most damnable errors, others tumbling down from the precipices of great and dangerous sins. We may well wonder that any are saved, when such as these miscarry. To consider, then, what it is that is wrought upon you, even that which the omnipotent God hath wrought; and what it is that is wrought by you, that which is beyond the power of

nature: we may well conclude, what a difficult matter it is to become a true and serious Christian altogether.

Use 3. May natural men go thus far in Christianity? Oh, be you then persuaded to go much further.

Do not rest in any attainment, short of heaven and glory. Rest not in any present attainment. And this, indeed, is the most natural use that can be made of this subject, when you hear how great a progress wicked men may make. I know that the hearts of the best Christians are ready to suggest to them, and they will be apt to conclude against themselves, that all, that is wrought upon them, is but the common work of the Spirit: therefore their graces are but counterfeit, and themselves yet short of Christianity: I know that this subject may cause such jealousies and suspicions to arise in the hearts of some: but the genuine use of this doctrine, is, not so much to pore over our present condition, as to stir you up to make a future progress. May a natural man make so great a progress, as to be almost a Christian? Then, certainly, I must never rest any where short of heaven. Well, therefore, the Apostle, in Heb. vi. 11, 12, after he had shown them at large what a height a natural man may arrive to, presseth them to be earnest in their endeavors after perfection. This will be the best evidence to you, that you are indeed Christians; that you have the truth of Christianity. Though natural men may possibly glitter in a glorious profession, and shine like the sun in its radiant splendor; yet, like it, they have their zenith, their highest degree; which when they have climbed to, they fall down again. But a true Christian's course hath not any declension: he may proceed infinitely, from one degree of grace to another; he may ascend and reach higher and higher, till he hath reached heaven; where all his infirmities shall be swallowed up, and abolished in consummated glory. And, indeed, this is the greatest evidence of the truth of grace. A natural man's motion to heaven is violent and unnatural: it is forced from him, by some external impressions upon the conscience, illuminations, and common works of the Holy Ghost; and, as soon as this external force is spent, he falls naturally back again to his former course of sin: as a stone may be carried a great height towards heaven, by an outward violent impression upon it; but, when that force is worn off, it falls naturally back again to the earth. Now a Christian mounts naturally to heaven; while, by reason of that dull mixture of earth that is in him, his course tends to the earth again: but the true Christian still mounts upward, from the principle that carries him up, which indeed never

totally spends itself. Therefore, if thou wouldst prove thyself to be not *almost*, but *altogether* a Christian, continue thy progress: still gain ground towards heaven: rest not satisfied with any present attainments; but be still rising and soaring, until thou hast gotten the world and them too under thy feet.

Use 4. When you see any, who have been forward in a profession and gone far in Christianity, to forsake their station, and fall back to their former course of profaneness, take heed that you do not reproach, that you do not scandalize religion with their apostasy.

This is that, which opens the mouths and hardens the hearts of wicked men; when they see such glorious, but yet temporary professors, to return with the dog to the vomit. They, indeed, first bless themselves in their own ways, as being better than the ways of God, as being better than the profession of religion: otherwise why should those, that so long have forsaken them, and, with a great deal of pomp, made such a glorious show and ostentation of religion and of conscientiousness; why should such return to their old ways? Secondly, it makes them think, that all professors are but hypocrites, that it is but a solemn cheat put upon the world, since such forward professors of it are found forsakers of it: "Some men please themselves with a few idle conceits of grace, and the new-birth communion with God, and the like unintelligible notions, when there is no other difference between them and others, but what only their fancies make." Oh, take heed, therefore, that you do not blaspheme the ways of God, when you see the apostasy of professors. No, these men were never in those ways. Had they been Christians indeed, they would never have deserted those holy ways: their natures were never changed; and, it is no wonder, that they are relapsed, and fallen back again into their old customs. To see the swine that is cleansed return again to the mire, is nothing strange: had Christ changed the nature of these swine, and made them his sheep; then, as they had first "escaped the pollutions of the world," so they would have kept themselves from ever being "entangled" by them. But this makes highly for the honor of Christianity; and proves it to be a thing so excellent, that it cannot be long counterfeited: hypocrisy shall certainly betray itself by its apostasy, that it had never any thing of true and saving grace, although it carried fair in a show and pretence of it.

II. The next thing is to show you, WHENCE IT IS THAT NATURAL MEN ARE ENABLED TO MAKE SO GREAT A PROGRESS TOWARDS CHRISTIANITY.

I shall give you a brief solution to this question : and that shall be drawn,

From the consideration of the subject ; and that is a natural man himself.

From the consideration of the object ; and that is holiness or Christianity, to which it tends.

i. If you look into the SUBJECT, the natural man, you will find in the man himself, and in that which is wrought upon him, enough to carry him out possibly to a very great progress in religion, and that may be twofold.

1. The carnal man may be carried very far towards Christianity, *from the mere strength and power of nature.*

For the mere power of corrupt nature is, of itself, sufficient to raise a man to any attainment, that is short of true saving grace. A natural man may so prepare and dispose his heart, as that the very next thing to be wrought upon him should be grace : it may carry him out to the externals of Christianity ; and, it may be, with more pomp and grandeur, than sometimes the power of grace doth carry out a child of God : when the power of nature takes on it the form of godliness, it will make bright and glittering professors. Now these externals of Christianity lie in two things, the performance of duties, and the avoiding of sin.

As for duties, they may so far outstrip and outshine a child of God, in the pomp and gaudiness of them, as to be their emulation and example : and, for sin, there is not any one particular sin, setting aside those common and unavoidable infirmities which are inseparable from the frailty of human nature, but a carnal man may keep himself from the commission of it, by the mere power of nature ; and there is scarce any sin, that is branded remarkably in the world, but some wicked man or other doth abstain from it, and that merely from the power of nature : one, by this power, abstains from this sin ; another, from that : and a third, from another sin : and each of these has power to abstain likewise from all these sins ; because what power the one hath, may, possibly, be found in the other, since, in nature, there is nothing partial, for a man naturally is not so. Again, the devil, when he tempts, doth not force and constrain them : he doth not forcibly move the black tongue of the swearer to curse and blaspheme ; nor doth he screw open the drunkard's mouth by force, to pour down intemperate cups ; nor force the murderer's hand to sheathe his sword in his brother's bowels, whether he will or no :

but he solicits the wills, and insinuates into the affections by his temptations, and makes these freely move the engine to that to which his design tends; and therefore all his triumphs are beggarly victories: he could not prevail over us, did not we prove traitors to our own souls; did not we surrender ourselves, by the consent of our own wills; else, we could never be distressed, much less taken by the violence of the tempter.

2. As men may proceed far toward Christianity by the power of nature, so *they may have common and ordinary works of the Holy Ghost upon them, that may carry them out to a very great progress.*

They may be made, saith the Apostle, "partakers of the Holy Ghost:" Heb. vi. 4, and that is, of His common gifts and operations. It is the Spirit of God, that enlightens their understandings, that awakens their consciences, that excites their affections. It is the Spirit, that works conviction, that works reformation, yea, and sanctification in wicked and unregenerate men: for we have that expression concerning them.

There is a two-fold sanctification.

(1) Of the flesh, consisting in the removal of all carnal and external filthiness; called by the Apostle escaping "the pollutions of the world," through lust: 2 Pet. ii. 20, and that consists in a separation from all those gross and vile sins, wherein the flagitious and debauched world wallows.

(2) There is likewise a sanctification of the Spirit, consisting in a separation from a state of nature to a state of grace.

The one is external, by reformation: the other is internal, by renovation.

The former sanctification a natural man may be made partaker of by the Holy Ghost; so as to have his life and actions stand at a greater distance from and a greater opposition to those carnal gross sins, with which the world is generally defiled: but this is no more than a common and ordinary work of the Holy Ghost: they may account the blood, whereby they are sanctified, an unholy thing. There is a far different force and energy, that the Holy Spirit puts forth, when it works conversion, and when it works only outward sanctification: in both it may work upon the heart; but in conversion it works upon the heart so as to change it and renew it, while in the reformation of a natural man he works upon the heart indeed, but it is only to change and amend the life; the Spirit may persuade the one to change his heart, but then *he* changeth the heart of the other: he may persuade the will of the one to submit to Christ, but then *he* subdues the will of the other:

he *persuades* the one to become a Christian, but he *makes* the other a Christian. Now there is a very wide difference between these two ways of working: by the one he only excites men to use somewhat of the power they have, but by the other he gives them the power they want.

And thus you see, what there is in man, considered both in nature and with the help of the common work of the Holy Ghost, that may carry him so far towards Christianity.

ii. There is also something considerable in the OBJECT, viz., religion and Christianity itself, whence it is natural men may make so great a progress towards it: and that is twofold, viz.

The attractiveness of religion: and its subserviency to itself.

1. *The attractiveness of religion.*

And this consists not only in the inward and spiritual beauty of holiness, which these men have not eyes to discern; but also in that happiness, which is annexed to religion and Christianity. This is that, which draws out natural men to all their attainments. Happiness is the great bait of men's desires, and that which sweetens the means tending to it: though they be in themselves very difficult and burdensome, yet, leading to happiness, they close with it: and, therefore, as the apprehensions of heaven and hell work upon a natural man more or less forcibly than the thoughts of the difficulty or tediousness of holy duties; so is his progress more or less strong and vigorous towards Christianity.

2. Another thing in Christianity or religion, that advanceeth some to so great a progress, is the *subserviency of religion to itself*. Religion doth mightily promote and advance itself.

(1) In that the performance of one part and of one duty of religion, obligeth and engageth to the performance of another.

As one sin draws on another, by consequence likewise doth one duty draw on another. There is a connection and dependence between them: hearing engageth to meditation, and meditation to prayer, and prayer for grace to endeavor after it: a glorious profession obligeth to something, at least that may be answerable to that profession. Thus, one duty of religion hands a man over to another; and, when he is passed through one, another stands ready to receive him.

(2) A little progress in religion doth facilitate.

It is harder, at first, to begin; than, having begun, to continue: because use and custom in any thing make it easy.

Now it is this subserviency of religion to itself, that may carry

men very far in it. When they have begun a profession, and entered upon one duty, that duty delivers them over to another, and makes it more facile and easy to them; because the precedent duty, as it doth engage them to, so it prepares them for, the subsequent duty, as well as engage them to the present duty. One duty doth, as it were, perform half the task and bear half the burden of the other.

Thus then you see, whence it is that natural men may make so great a progress towards Christianity, so as to be almost Christians, from the power of nature, and from the attractiveness of religion.

Now, here, if you ask me, "How shall I know, whether it be the power of nature helped by the common workings of the Spirit, or the power of supernatural grace, that carries men out to all their profession?" I shall give you but this one discriminating character of it: see whether your abilities be greater in the things that belong to grace and holiness, than they are to natural things. A child of God, who is but of weak parts as to the things of the world, that can scarce give you a rational account of such affairs when propounded to him, bring him to the things of God, and how admirably will he be able to unfold, even the very mysteries that are hid from the wise and prudent of the world! Put him upon any common discourse, how broken and incoherent is he! but engage him in prayer, how doth he expatiate and enlarge, and what a torrent of divine rhetoric will he then pour into the bosom of God! Is this from nature that he is able to exceed and go beyond himself? No, certainly. What the Prophet Isaiah speaks concerning the ways of God is very observable (chap. xxxv. 8), "A highway shall be there.....and it shall be called the way of holiness.....the way-faring men, though fools, shall not err therein:" though they wander and err in every other way; though they do not take the right way to be rich, and great, and honorable in the world; yet these, that are fools in every thing else, shall not err from the way of holiness: and, therein, lies the only wisdom. But, take a mere carnal man, that hath eminent abilities in earthly things: usually, he is never weaker than when he is engaged in that which is holy and spiritual; at least his chief excellence doth not lie there: though he doth perform the duty well, yet he doth not do it beyond what he doth in ordinary and natural things. Now, how is it with you? Do you find yourselves carried much beyond the rate and size of your natural abilities? Do you never

so much exceed yourselves, nor do so well, as when you are about some holy and spiritual employment? That you are not so skillful in any thing, as in holy performances? This is a good sign, that it is the power of grace, and not only the power of nature, that carries you forth to the profession of religion which you make. I take the extraordinary gifts, bestowed upon unregenerate men in a vast disproportion from their natural abilities, to be long ago ceased.

III. The third general proposition, was to show WHAT IT IS THAT HINDERS THESE PROFICIENTS FROM MAKING FURTHER PROGRESS: that, when they are *almost*, what keeps them from being *altogether* Christians.

I answer to this, in general: It is only through a willful and wretched neglect of what they might do, that any of them do fall short of grace here and glory hereafter. It is not our want of power, but our want of will, or rather indeed our willingness, that makes us miscarry to our eternal perdition.

I shall illustrate this by a plain and obvious similitude. Suppose that God should promise to bestow heaven upon us, if we would but reach forth and touch it with our hands. Now, although we can never reach so high: yet if we do not stretch forth our hands, and reach as high as we are able to do, the fault of losing heaven will not lie upon the inability and impossibility, that were in us to touch it; but upon our willful neglect of striving to our utmost to do what we are able to do: the reason why we fall short, would not be because our arm is not long enough; but because we do not stretch it forth to the utmost length.

The instance is somewhat plain and familiar: but yet it holds an exact proportion to the case in hand. God promiseth heaven to us, if we will but touch it; that is, if we will lay hold on Christ by faith: which faith we can no more work in ourselves by our own proper efficiency, than touch heaven with our finger; yet, howsoever, if we do not do our utmost, our falling short of heaven and faith cannot be imputed to the impossibility that we lie under, but to our willful sloth and neglect. It is not men's "cannots" but their "will nots," not their impotence, but their obstinacy, that destroys them: "Ye will not come to me, that ye may have life:" John v. 40. *Ye will not!* Doth not Christ himself tell us, that no man can come to him, except the Father draw him? True: but the fault lies in the stubbornness of your wills: though you

could come, you would not : therefore, it is not your weakness, but your willfulness, that keeps you from coming to Christ.

Let me here appeal to yourselves. Doth not he deserve eternal death, who had a power in his hand to make himself a Christian, and yet would not ? Certainly you will all conclude, this man is very equally and justly dealt with, if sentenced to eternal misery ; since he had a power to avoid that misery, and to lay hold on eternal life and happiness : his condemnation lies on his own head for his willful contempt of salvation, which he had a power to work out ; and, by a diligent improvement of the means tendered to him, to make sure of. Every carnal man, if he had power to convert himself, yet, through his willful neglect and obstinacy, would not do it : and this appears, because there is not one of us, that doth as much as he might do. There is not one natural man that doth as much as he might do : will he not now do what he can to prepare and dispose his heart for grace ? Then much less would he work grace in his heart, though he had the power to do it ; and therefore the whole default of men's falling short of grace, lies in their willful neglects. Men indulge themselves in carnal sloth : and, if they can but maintain the pace and rate of common ordinary professors in a formal course of duty, or abstain from gross sins, then they are contented, and will be drawn on no further. Cannot they command their thoughts to dwell more fixedly and more abidingly upon spiritual objects ? Cannot they be oftener in meditation ; and meditate more fervently, and with more affection ? In both, have they not power to refuse temptations and sinful motions ? Doth the devil use any force or violence upon them ? Did they ever find, when they threw themselves upon their knees in prayer, that he stiffened them that they could not bend, or that he stopped their mouths from speaking, or their hearts from thinking ? Had he a power to strike men lame, when they should come to the ordinances ; or deaf, when they should hear ; or dumb, when they should speak ; then there were some show and color of reason, why men attended no more frequently, why they heard no more attentively, why they did not ponder more considerately, why they prayed so seldom and heartlessly : did but the devil compel them to this, the sinner might have some excuse ; but, when he must woo their consent and allowance, and wait their pleasure and leisure, it is merely a wretched neglect or willfulness, that they yield to the commission of any sin. Can you do all this, and more ; and yet will you not ? Know, that, if you perish, it is only your own fault : you, your ownelves, are the

bloody murderers of your own souls. It will be in vain for you to plead, that you had no power to make yourselves Christians: you never went so far as to make a trial, whether you had a power or no: for a man not to do the utmost that he might do towards Christianity, though he hath no power to make himself a Christian, is the same as if he had a power, and yet will not make use of it. Oh, let this that I have said prevail with you, to be not only *almost*, but *altogether* Christians; and to put forth all the power, and might, and ability, that you have, in the working out of your own salvation. Is there not infinite reason, why you should speedily set about this important work, while you have time and opportunity for the doing of it? Is it not a matter of the greatest moment in the world, and not to be delayed one moment? Be persuaded, then, to the speedy practice of it.

OBJECT. Some desperate wretches may think, indeed, that "Arguments to persuade men to work out their salvation, may be of weighty import to enforce the duty upon those that do expect salvation; but, for my part, I pretend not so high: let me but enjoy now the sins which I serve and the pleasures which I pursue: and, for the state of my soul hereafter, I commend that to the mercy of God: and, if I must perish, I will perish with as much ease and content as I may. It is hard to alter an irreversible doom; and, if it be to perdition, it is but folly to hang down the head, and blubber the eyes, and break the heart for that which cannot be altered. If I must go to hell, I may as soon be carried down thither in a flood of tears, as in doing ungodly actions. Why should I conspire with God's decree to make myself miserable? If he hath sentenced me to hell hereafter, I may as well sentence myself to a heaven here. My future torments are in his hands, but my present delights are in my own. Therefore, if salvation and happiness be such nice points, I forego them; and will embrace more easy and more obvious pleasures."

Ans. I know there is no pious heart here, but shivers with horror at such language, though it be but personated. Methinks, rather it represents the speech of a devil, who is without all possibility of happiness, than of men who are in the way to it. Indeed, it is the speech of the devil; but it is likewise in the hearts of men: when they storm and bluster at the difficulties of salvation, and narrowness of the way, and straitness of the gate, the devil interposeth this suggestion, "It is as good to perish with

ease, as to be saved with so much labor and pains." But, what! shall we leave men to such desperate resolutions, and suffer them to go dreaming to hell and destruction? Certainly, religion hath arguments enough to prevail, even with these; if they would but show themselves to be men, and but ponder how much reason can speak.

For, consider thou, that wilt rather perish, than make thy life a trouble to thee by obedience: God may, under thy disobedience, make thy life a trouble, yea a hell to thee, by his terrors. Thou thinkest that thy garments of sin and pollution will sit more loose and easy about thee, than the garments of holiness, that are too straitlaced and troublesome: yea, but what if God should roll these thy filthy garments in brimstone, and fire them about thee? How dreadfully wouldst thou be disappointed, when, instead of that ease which thou seekest in the service of sin, God should make thee thine own tormentor, and make thy conscience a hell incarnate! Believe it, the wrath of God can fry the marrow in thy bones, and reduce thy soul to ashes. Read Psalm lxxxviii. 1-18, and you will think it a doleful and sad description of the state of the damned. "While I suffer thy terrors I am distracted:" and, if the wrath of the Almighty lay thus sore upon a holy man, how fretting and corroding will it be upon the leprous soul, and upon an ulcerated conscience! If it burns up the green tree, what will become of the dry tree, which is but as prepared fuel for it to prey upon? No man hath his present delights and contentments in his own power, because no man hath his own conscience in his own power: it will speak, yea, and that terrible things; even then, when a sinner hath done all he can to sear and stupefy it.

Consider, again: how is it with you, after the rage of your sinning is over? Are you not haunted with fearful reflections and ghastly thoughts of despair and horror? Could we but unbowel a sinner, we should find those conscience-worms, gnawing and knotting about him, and devouring his heart. And are these wont to dissolve into trouble, for fear religion and holiness should trouble them? Are they content to buy ease and quiet at such a rate, as the loss of heaven and eternal torments amount to? And is this the ease and quiet that they purchase with it? The devil puts a gross cheat upon these men: he changeth not the trouble, but the time of it: they shun the work of God, only because it is troublesome in doing, though it doth leave behind it the blessed fruits of peace, joy, and satisfaction; and they engage in the work of the devil, which, as soon as the heat and fury of it is a little

over, leaves, in their sober thoughts, nothing but anguish, stings, and torments. And, therefore, be not deceived: suffer not the devil any longer to abuse you: and to impose his drudgery upon you, under the notion of ease and quiet. If your consciences were once awakened, I know the work of the devil must needs bring you more vexation, besides the shame, than ever you would have from the work of God: yea, the very omission and neglect of God's work is a far greater trouble, than the performance of it would be. Therefore, if you look no farther than your present content and satisfaction, if you would go to your final estate the easiest way, whatever it be, think not to attain this by giving up yourselves to a way of sin, nor by wounding your own consciences, which with trouble afterwards will be sure to be avenged upon you; but, in a way of duty and laborious working, you only can find present content, and shall certainly find future happiness.

OBJECT. "True," may some say, "possibly the work of God might be more pleasing and satisfactory to us than the work of the devil, if we could work it. But, to what end is it, that God requires from us to work? To what purpose doth he command us? Doth not he himself know, that we have no power? Doth not he himself say, that we are 'dead in trespasses and sins?' Is it rational, is it just, to bid a dead man work? Doth it become that God, who would be thought by us to be infinitely gracious and merciful, to mock and deride human misery, when he commands those things from us which he knows to be impossible? Had he bid us blend light and darkness together, or bend the axle-tree of the world till both poles met; had he bid us fling the stars out of their orbs, or with our hands stop the sun in the midst of his course; all these great impossibilities are as easily achieved, as by our own power to work any part of divine and acceptable obedience without gracious assistance from God. We can as soon glorify, as sanctify ourselves. What should we then do, but only sit still and expect, till efficacious grace should move and act us, and we not able to gainsay and resist it? Till God so draw us, that we must run; and so call us, that we must answer? Till then, our obedience is an impossibility, and all our attempts are vain and fruitless."

This now is a slothful sinner's pretence, why he will not work: and no doubt but that too often it doth flash into the thoughts of

most men; whereby their hearts are discouraged and their hands weakened, in the service of God.

Ans. In answering this, I shall not enter into that great debate of the power of nature to do what is good and acceptable to God; but proceed in a plain way, and accommodated to practice; and, that, which will be most convincing to the conscience.

First. Men will not plead thus in matters of far less concernment, than the salvation of their souls.

Would a master, when he commands his servant to work, take this, think you, for a sufficient excuse, that he hath no power to work till God act and move him? It may as well be objected by your servants to you, as by you to God. Tell me, what power have I to speak, or you to hear one word, unless God do concur to it? Nay, we are not sufficient to think one good thought: 2 Cor. iii. 5, and do we make this an excuse to forbear those actions, that are necessary and convenient? Do we therefore resolve to do nothing, because it is impossible for us to do any thing unless God concurs with it? What stupid, dull folly were this! We put it daily and hourly to trial: and produce me that man, that can say God was wanting to him in his concurrence. What a miserable and ridiculous task would it be, if, in every action of our lives that we cannot do without God, yet we should sit still, and question God's concurrence! Do you sit down, to try whether God will enable you to rise when you are down? Do you question whether God will concur to another step, though it is impossible you should stir and move, unless God act and move you? Yet this hinders not men's endeavors: "In him we live, and move, and have our being." Why do not you do so in spiritual matters? We can do nothing without God. True: yet put it to the trial, whether or no God will concur with you. Certainly, that man must be nameless, that can say, "I was truly willing, and endeavored to do some spiritual good, but God was wanting to me in his concurrence."

Secondly. Those men, who thus make impotence a pretence for their sloth, do not indeed believe what they themselves pretend.

No: it is the inward and secret thought of them all, that they have a power to work out their own salvation: and, therefore, whether they have or no, still they are inexcusable: while they think they have this power, yet they sit still. Although a man be chained fast down that he cannot go; yet, if he thinks himself at liberty, and notwithstanding sits still, you may soon tell where the fault lies: it may be imputed to want of will, and not to want of

power. So, here: wicked men think they have power to work, however they speak otherwise: therefore, they are utterly inexcusable if they do not work: it is as clear as the light, that their sloth proceeds not from their impotence, but from their own willfulness.

I shall endeavor, by a few arguments, to convince you, that you do indeed think that you have power to work out your own salvation: therefore, if you do it not, you are altogether inexcusable, whether you have that power or no.

First. Did you never, when God hath shaken his rod and whip over you, seriously promise and resolve to work; his rod, I mean, either of conviction or affliction?

Have not these made you enter into an engagement with God, that you would serve and obey him for the future? Did you not really thus resolve? There are few here, but sometimes, at least, in a fit and pang of conscience have so done. And why did you resolve all this, and yet at the same time think and believe you could do nothing? Did you only mock God, and play with your own consciences? Certainly, your consciences then were too much provoked, and too much awakened to be thus jested and dallied with. We find this temper in the Israelites, when they were frightened at the terrible glory from Mount Sinai: *Exod.* xxiv. 3: see how confidently they promise and resolve: "And all the people answered with one voice, and said, 'All the words, which the Lord hath said, will we do.'" So the Jews, in their great distress, *Jer.* xlii. 6, "Whether it be good, or whether it be evil, we will obey the voice of the Lord our God, &c., that it may be well with us." Alas! to how many pious purposes and holy resolutions have your dangers, your fears, and your sick-beds been witness! Have they not heard you breathe out, "Spare, O Lord, spare a little longer: give some space: try us yet once more: and, O Lord, we will reform, we will amend our sinful lives, we will perform neglected duties, and never more again return to folly?" Are not these resolutions an evident conviction? Certainly, you thought you had a power so to do; and, therefore, if you do not endeavor to perform, you are altogether inexcusable.

Secondly. Did you never, in your whole lives, perform a duty unto God? Did you never pray?

Is there any here so desperately profane, so lost to all show of goodness, that hath not done this? And to what end have you prayed? For what did you perform your duty? Was it not for salvation? And did you work for salvation, and yet think you

had no power to work for it? It is impossible: men's very works do plainly show, that they do think that they have a power something still must be done, though it be but formally, slightly, and coldly: a mere "Lord, have mercy upon me," a customary "Lord forgive me;" yet something conscience will require, which men reckon upon, and make account to be working out their salvation.

Thirdly. Wherefore is it that you trust unto and rely upon your good works, if you think you have no power to work out your salvation?

Would it be so hard and difficult a matter to take men off from leaning so much upon their works, if they did not think that they had power to work out their own salvation? Men do apprehend a worth and sufficiency in what themselves do, in order to eternity. Bid them forego their works, and renounce their own righteousness, and this is a hard saying: you may almost persuade them as soon to renounce all their hopes of heaven. This is an evident conviction, whatever notions men may entertain to stop the mouth of a clamorous conscience, when it calls on them for working and laboring, that yet they do not believe what they themselves speak concerning their impotence.

Fourthly. When the spirit of God was dealing with your hearts, persuading you to enter upon a course of duty and obedience, did you never procrastinate and use delays? Did you never stifle the breathings, nor quench the motions of the Holy Spirit, by thinking it was time enough to do it hereafter?

"What need I begin so soon, or vex my flesh, or deny myself the joys and pleasures of this life, even as soon as I am come to relish them? When sickness or gray hairs admonish me, and tell me I am near unto eternity; when old age promiseth me, that the severities of religion shall be no long trouble; then, will I look after the concerns of my soul; then, it will be time enough; then, I will repent, believe, obey, and work out that salvation, that will be then hastening upon me." Tell me truly, have not these been the foolish reasonings of your hearts? Have you not thus often promised God and your own consciences? And doth not this plainly imply, that you thought you had power to do it? "Therefore thou art inexcusable, O man, whosoever thou art:" it is in vain to plead want of power: God will confute thee by thy very thoughts. Hadst thou no power? Although thou hadst not, yet thou thoughtest thou hadst, yet wouldst not endeavor to work: therefore, thy ruin is as willful, and thy condemnation as just, as if

thou hadst a power, and wouldst not work; for thou perishest merely through the default of thine own will.

Thirdly. Whether wicked men have this power or no to work out their own salvation, I shall not now stand to inquire: but if they had it, yet they would not work with it; and, therefore, it is a most vain and insufficient plea, to pretend they wanted power.

Now this appears evidently, because there is no wicked man, that ever did so much as he was able to do by the mere strength of nature, without the assistance of supernatural grace: and, therefore, it is not their inability; but their willful sloth, that doth destroy them. Do but answer your own consciences: was there not one duty more, which you could have performed; not one temptation, not one corruption more, which you could have resisted? Could not you have prayed, read, or meditated upon heavenly things; then, when your hearts and thoughts have been vain, worldly, and sinful, and devilish? Might not that time have been spent in holy converse, which you trifled away in idle, impertinent discourse, or in doing nothing, or that which was much worse than nothing? What force, what constraint is laid upon you? Can you not think? And, if you can, cannot you think of God as well as of the world? As well concerning fulfilling God's will, and working out your salvation, as fulfilling your lusts? Can you not speak? And, if you can, can you not speak to God in holy prayer, and of the things of God in holy discourse, as well as of your trades and bargains; those low and trivial matters, that are not worthy of men, much less of Christians? What force is there upon you? Doth the devil pry open the drunkard's mouth, and pour down his excessive and intemperate cups whether he will or no? Doth the devil violently move the tongue of the swearer and blasphemer, to revile the holy and reverend name of God? Doth he strike men dumb, when they should pray; or deaf, when they should hear; or senseless, when they should understand? Is there any such force or constraint laid upon you? May you not avoid the one, and do the other, if you yourselves please? You can: but you will not: therefore, neither would you work out your own salvation, if you could. Is there any hope, that you, who will not do the less that God requires from you, should ever be induced to perform the greater? Let your weakness and impotence be what it will, yet your condemnation will lie upon you, so long as your willfulness is much greater than your weakneass. No, sinners, your precious and immortal souls will eternally perish now for want of will to

save them. Pity yourselves: will you lose yourselves forever, only out of sloth? Will you sleep yourselves into hell, and go drowsily into destruction? Is it more painful to work the works of God, than it is to perish forever under insupportable torments? Therefore, do you what you possibly can: labor and toil at salvation, rather than fail of it. Let this never grate nor fret your consciences in hell, that you lie there burning forever, merely for your willful neglects.

When a man is gone far towards Christianity, there are several things, that make him neglect a further progress. As,

I. HIS GROUNDLESS FANCYING OF DIFFICULTIES AND HARD ENCOUNTERS IN THE WAYS OF GOD.

Oh, were it but as easy to be holy as sinful, he were wretched that would refuse to be a Christian; or, were Christianity but one hard pull or difficult pang, that would soon be over, there were some encouragement for them: but, when they have already struggled, and wrestled, and waded against the stream, thus far; and yet see no end, duty to be performed upon duty, and temptation upon temptation to be resisted, still to be combating with devils, still to be crossing and vexing themselves, no respite, no breathing-time allowed them: this takes off their wheels; and, though they are able to do this, yet they will rather sit down quite short of grace, than run through such hardships to attain it: and so they come up in the mid-way, neither holy, nor profane; but please themselves with a mediocrity, and middle rank of religion, and dare not go further for fear of difficulties, nor yet dare fall further back for fear of conscience; and so they lie hovering between heaven and hell. Now this is merely from willful sloth; Prov. xxvi. 13: "The slothful man saith, there is a lion in the way: a lion is in the streets." Here Solomon brings in a drowsy slug-gard, dreaming of dangers and difficulties, to excuse his sloth: "I dare not stir abroad, for there is a lion in the streets:" a likely matter, that there should be a lion in the streets! But yet-see how this fancy works with him: any thing is an excuse for the slug-gard. In ver. 14, "As the door turneth upon the hinges, so doth the slothful upon his bed:" a door is often in motion, to and fro; but it gains no ground, makes no progress, still hangs where it did: so it is with slothful professors: that, which they have already attained to, is, that they move to and fro like a door upon the hinges, still the same motion over and over again, no new pro-

gress, no new attainment ; and that, merely because they are sluggish and lazy, and fancy difficulties to themselves, and strange apparitions in the ways of God, that make them stand at a stay where they are, and not dare to take one step forward. As it was with the Israelites, who came to the very borders of the land of Canaan, Numb. xiii. 27, 28, 33, when the searchers had brought reports to them, that the land indeed was good and fruitful, but the walls of the city were built up to heaven, and that there were many giants, and that they should be beaten and eaten ; they were not so much allured with the goodness of the land, as they were deterred by the thoughts of the difficulties ; and, though God himself bade them arise, and enter, and take possession, they would not venture upon so hazardous an exercise, and so difficult an enterprise : so, there are many forward professors, who are come to the very borders of the land of Canaan, to the very entrance into the kingdom of heaven, who, when they see what strongholds of iniquity they must cast down, with what principalities and powers they must fight, and what lusts, gigantic as the sons of Anak, they must subdue and destroy, this frights them from attempting any further.

ii. TO BE ALMOST A CHRISTIAN CARRIES IN IT THOSE ADVANTAGES AND ACCOMMODATIONS, WHICH, WERE THEY ALTOGETHER SUCH, THEY MUST LOSE : and, therefore, this is one reason, why so many stick in the new-birth.

Such an one is no saint ; and, therefore, the men of the world embrace him : such an one is no profane and scandalous person ; and, therefore, the children of God embrace him, and think well of him too : and thus he doth hold a correspondence with both of them, which, were he altogether either one or the other, he must break off ; and, therefore, finding the convenience of this neutral estate, he stops where he is, short of true grace. Were he a profane wretch, then those, that are truly godly, would avoid his company : or, were he truly godly, then the world would reject and scorn him : the godly esteem and love him, and from their ready charity they look upon him to be truly gracious : "Those, that are true Christians," thinks the almost Christian, "look upon me as such as themselves : and what need I begin, by a forward zeal, to disoblige the world ? And the wicked and profane respect me too, because I go a little before them ; though not quite cross and contrary to them : and so I enjoy the good opinion of both sorts ; which, were I fully one or the other, I should hardly attain." This man can,

as it were, hold heaven with one hand, and yet hold the world with the other; not lose his interest in the one, and yet retain his interest in the other: he can enjoy the delights and pleasures of the one, and then hope for the rewards and happiness of the other. Were we lodged in a star, then the earth would appear very small, and almost nothing, as the stars do now to us; so, were we more above, the earth would appear either as very small, or as nothing: thus it is with a child of God: he soars by the wings of faith and love to the heavenly Jerusalem, and the earth appears very inconsiderable to him; but an unregenerate man, when he mounts highest, yet still will be sure to keep earth in his eye: he will not lose the sight of that; and, therefore, when he hath got to such a pitch, that he is able to discover something of heaven and yet not lose the sight of earth, there he hangs in *equilibrio*, and will be drawn no further: he keeps something of the earth in his eye; and will not lose nor diminish his sight or share of it, for the hopes and joys of heaven.

iii. FALSE OPINIONS AND CONCEITS THAT THEY ARE ALREADY CHRISTIANS, hinder these forward professors from being true Christians.

It may be, they would be Christians indeed, did they not think they were already such. When men are gone far, then they are apt to think they are got home; and so they have taken up their rest, and will be driven on no further: they think that what they have already gotten, is enough to bear their charges to heaven; and so they grow careless of getting more: they are persuaded that they are Christians; and that keeps them from being persuaded to to be such. I do not intend to forbid eminent professors to think they are indeed Christians; but let them look how this persuasion works with them: doth it tend to make them more careless, negligent, and remiss? When they have been under troubles of conscience for their sins, then they saw themselves in a lost and undone condition, and had hot and scalding apprehensions of the wrath of God; then they were laborious to frequent duties, conscientious in their walking, and fearful lest they should sin: but, since their troubles have been worn off, they have entertained better hopes and better opinions of their state: are they not grown more loose, and more regardless? They do not take so much pains with their hearts; nor are they so strict, and holy, and severe in their lives: I must tell such, what the Apostle tells the Galatians, ch. v. 7, 8: "Ye did run well: who hindered you? This persuasion

cometh not of him that calleth you:" this persuasion that you are Christians, cometh not of him that calleth you: possibly it would be well with them, if they did not think they were so. Sirs, if the thoughts of your being Christians and in a state of grace, do encourage you to walk worthy of that holy calling; if the hopes of your good and holy estate, do engage you to purify yourselves as God is pure, as they will work if they be right and genuine; then still entertain and cherish them: but, if they turn to looseness, remissness, or presumption, here suspect them to be the overweening conceits and elevations of a carnal heart; and such, as will certainly hinder you of what you thus fondly imagine yourselves to be, hinder you from making further progress in the ways of Christianity, in regard you take up the false conceits that you are Christians already.

iv. Another ground, whence it is that forward professors many times fall short of true Christianity, is, that when they are already gotten far, then, ESPECIALLY THE DEVIL DOTH ALL HE CAN TO HINDER THEM: when they have gone far towards grace and Christianity, then he unites all his force and subtlety to stop them from proceeding further, lest they get from under his power and jurisdiction.

He knows that if they once become Christians, they are then almost out of his reach; and, therefore, whatever lust be in the soul, he will then especially stir it up; whatsoever reserves of temptations there be, he will then send them upon the soul: for none are more assaulted with horrors and multiplied temptations, than those, who make a great progress towards the ways of God, and are near to the borders of true Christianity; because then the devil suspects that he shall lose them, and that they are even revolting from him. When they begin to move towards heaven, and labor after true grace and holiness, the devil sees that ordinary temptations are not then sufficient to secure them; that those lusts, which before hampered and captivated them at his pleasure, will not now so easily prevail; for he finds them too resolute, too rough, and untractable to deal with. He begins then to fear to what a rebellion this may grow; and, therefore, he sets upon them with all his power, way-lays them with all ambushments, circumvents them with all his wiles and stratagems: and, though these be only armies and musters of shadows, which a man might break through without any danger, would he but arm himself with noble and undaunted resolutions; yet, with these, the devil assaults and undermines them, and that incessantly, and doth at last stop them

in their course towards grace, if not beat them back again to their former course of profaneness. Luke xi. 24-26: "When the unclean spirit is gone out of a man, he walketh through dry places, seeking rest; and finding none, he saith, I will return unto my house, whence I came out: and when he cometh, he findeth it swept and garnished. Then goeth he, and taketh.....seven other spirits more wicked than himself; and they enter in, and dwell there: and the last state of that man is worse than the first!" *i. e.* when men have cast out unclean, gross lusts by an external sanctification, so that the devil seems to be dislodged; when he seeks to return again to his ancient seat and possession, he finds the heart swept and garnished; swept from the filth of common sins, and garnished with common graces, as its ornaments; so that there seems no re-admission or re-entrance to this unclean spirit; and then he goes and takes to himself seven other spirits worse than himself, that is, as I conceive, stronger temptations and more prevailing lusts; and, by them, he enters, and dwells there, and defiles that clean-swept house, and not only keeps the sinner from being better, but make his latter end worse than his beginning.

v. When men have gone far towards Christianity, NATURAL CONSCIENCE THEN LEAVES THEM, AND CEASES TO EXCITE AND PROVOKE THEM TO A FURTHER PROFICIENCY.

Conscience is the spur, that quickens wicked men to make that progress which they do make: now when it hath brought them past common sins to known and common duties, then it leaves them, and urges them no further; and so they sit down far short of true grace and Christianity, which they endeavored after. Let me say to such men, as St. Paul to the Galatians, chap. v. 7, "Ye did run well: who did hinder you?" was it the difficulty of religion, or the strength of temptation, or the flatteries and allurements of the world, or the violence and rage of your own lusts? But might you not, nevertheless, have armed yourself with peremptory resolutions? Might you not undauntedly and victoriously have broken through all these? Were you not able, when you stood still, or when you gave back as frightened and terrified at these things, to make one step, and another step still forwards? Could you not proceed still further, and press onwards through all these? Yes: you might have gone much further, if you would: you might have made a further progress, though all hell had armed itself against you: therefore, if you perish, there will be cause and reason to blame yourselves: you can only charge your damnation on your own willful sloth and negligence.

This may suffice for an answer to the third general proposition: whence it is, that professors, that have gone far towards Christianity, yet fall short of grace, and of being true Christians. They were too nice to encounter difficulties: they were apt and forward to think well of themselves: they were too faint-hearted to cope with temptations, loth to disoblige the world, and would not proceed further than spurred on by natural conscience; and, therefore, willfully fell short, through their own sloth and negligence, of grace here, and of glory hereafter.

IV. The last general propounded, was to show you **THE FOLLY AND EXTREME MISERY OF THOSE, WHO PROCEED THUS FAR AS TO BE ALMOST-CHRISTIANS, AND YET WILL NOT BE PERSUADED TO BE SUCH ALTOGETHER.**

The Apostle seems to be very passionate, Gal. iii. 1, 3: "O foolish Galatians, who hath bewitched you, that ye should not obey the truth, before whose eyes Jesus Christ hath been evidently set forth, crucified among you. Are ye so foolish? having begun in the Spirit, are ye now made perfect by the flesh?" What! are you mad? Are you besotted? Are you bewitched out of your common reason and understanding; that, having begun in the Spirit, and made so far progress in the ways and knowledge of Christ, after all this, you should fall back again to carnal, fleshly rudiments? Why, the same may I say to many: You, that are professors, who hath bewitched you? Why are you so foolish, as, when you have not only begun, but proceeded far towards holiness and true grace, that yet you should give over, and sit down in a state of nature and unregeneracy short of it?

Consider but your folly and misery in these particulars.

i. Is it not extreme folly, madness, and misery, **WILLFULLY TO FALL SHORT OF THAT, WHICH YOU HAVE ALREADY TAKEN SO MUCH PAINS TO ATTAIN?**

What! after all the labor, and hardships, and difficulties that you have already gone through to obtain grace, now to sit down short of it, and lose all! Will you willfully lose all your prayers, and all your tears? All your convictions, and all your conflicts? Shall all these be so much labor in vain? Is not this much below the ingenuousness of your resolutions in inferior matters? Do not you use to quicken your endeavors by such arguments as these: "I have spent so much upon it, I have taken so much pains about

it, therefore I will see the end of it, and go through with it?" Do you think much to lose your labor in any thing but salvation; but in working out the salvation of your precious, immortal souls? What though it be hard and difficult to go further: consider, was it not hard and difficult to arrive at that unto which you have already attained? And are you so foolish, as to be willing to lose the fruit and benefit of the difficulties, which you have already passed, only for fear of difficulties that are yet to come? If Christianity be not worthy your pains, why did you ever engage in it? And if it be, why do you sit still? You will be guilty of extreme folly, either in this or that: for you enter upon Christianity, without sitting down, and reckoning what it will cost you. Christ himself brands you for fools: Luke xiv. 28-30: "For which of you, intending to build a tower, sitteth not down first, and counteth the cost, whether he have sufficient to finish it? Lest, haply, after he hath laid the foundation, and is not able to finish it, all that behold it begin to mock him, saying, this man began to build, and was not able to finish."

If it was not worth your pains, what a folly was it to attempt it! if you thought it worth all and more, what a folly then was it to flag! And could you, before you came so nigh to grace and so nigh to glory, could you see such beauty and such desirableness in it at so great a distance, as to persuade you to come thus far; and, now, when you are much nearer, and can see much more of its excellence and comeliness, dare you now despise and condemn it, when you have not only the promise of God to be your encouragement, but you have also given earnest too? For that profession, and those endeavors, and those duties through which you have already passed, are all, as it were, the earnest of your further progress: this earnest you lose: profession, endeavors, and duty, all come to nothing, if, after all, you rest anywhere short of grace: you lose your earnest which you give, if you be but almost Christians, and rest anywhere short of true Christianity. What extreme folly is this, for men to disquiet themselves in vain, and take so much pains to pray and hear, and to keep themselves from many sins, and perform many duties; and yet, because they will do no more, lose the benefit of all this! What is it for which you do all this? Is it not to obtain grace and glory? And will you do so much for such an excellent end, and yet willfully fall short of it? You may remain graceless without all this labor: if you are fully resolved for hell, why do you do any thing? To hell you may go, without praying or hearing; without striving, or conflicting, or performing one duty, or resist-

ing one sin as you do : if you are resolved for heaven, why do you not do more ? All your praying, hearing, striving, and wrestling will be lost and in vain, if you do not hold on, if you do not continue. What a folly is it for you to have gone so far, and to have won every step of ground by clear force ; to have toiled in the ways of religion, with sweat and anguish, and disquieting to your soul ; and yet, at last, to lose and frustrate all this pains, through your cursed and willful sloth and negligence ! to give all away, and fall willfully short of grace and salvation !

ii. Is it not gross and inexcusable folly, TO DESIST, AFTER SO FAR PROGRESS ; whereas, for aught we know, had we but proceeded a little further, we might have obtained that grace of which we fall short ?

And how know you, but that, upon your further endeavors, God might have bestowed that grace for which you strive ? God is not wanting in this kind : to those, who improve the power of nature which they have, he gives the power of grace which they have not. Yet, when men arrive thus far, and come as it were to the very porch of heaven, what thick and dull folly is it, when there is as it were but a step or two between them and glory, to break off their progress and sit down short ! What ! is it more labor, to go those few steps more, than those which you have already gone ? Were you willing and contented, to do all that you have already done, for that, which is but like grace ; and will you not be persuaded to do a little more, for that, which is true grace ? It may be God may convert you, by the very next prayer you make : he may convert you, by the next sermon you hear : he may give you true grace, when you next of all oppose any temptation ; or when you next of all struggle against any lust : the very next step, which you take in his way, may carry you to heaven, for aught you know. Now the great probability of this, nay were it only a bare possibility, makes a man guilty of the greatest folly, who hath gone thus far towards holiness, if he neglect a further progress towards it.

iii. WHAT A DANGEROUS AND DREADFUL THING IS IT, FOR MEN TO CLIMB SO HIGH ; AND YET TO HAVE NO HOLDFAST TO DEPEND UPON, NO FOUNDATION TO SUPPORT THEM !

Yet thus it is with every elevated carnal professor, that falls short of grace. He is like a man, that stands upon the sharp top of a towering pinnacle, where he hath no other holdfast but a hand-

ful of air. But the standing of a child of God is firm: his feet are fixed upon an immovable rock, even the Rock of Ages; and God reacheth out his hand from heaven to support him. It is disputed by some nice reasoners, whether a man, if he were lifted up above the magnetic and attractive force of the earth, may not stand as safely and walk in the air as he doth now upon the earth. It is true of a child of God, when he hath got beyond the reach of earthly attractions, he may walk safely in that sublime way which leads to heaven; but, for wicked men, that have not got beyond the malignity of the earth, it is exceeding dangerous: their earthly minds and affections, and their earthly conversations, will in the end bear them down headlong; unless they climb still higher, until they have got beyond these worldly attractions. Now would it not make you tremble, to see a man borne up in the air, as the poets feign of Icarus, with waxen wings, that are subject to melt and fall off, and betray their charge to certain ruin and perdition? Thus it is with every carnal professor, that has gone far in Christianity. And is it not YOU, that fly only with waxen wings, I mean the power of nature and the common works of the Holy Ghost, which may fall off and leave you in eternal ruin?

iv. And hence it follows, in the fourth place, that these aspiring professors, who have attained to a high pitch, yet fall short of grace, BECAUSE THEY WANT FIRM FOOTING TO ASSURE THEIR STANDING.

They usually either desperately tumble headlong into the commission of some foul gross sins; or else they grow brain-sick, and turn aside to maintain some prodigious error. This is usually the issue of such lofty professors. As we see a cloud, that hath been drawn up by the sun, how it hovers a while in the air, but anon is wrapped and whirled about with every wind, and so is utterly lost and dissipated; or else it falls down again to the earth in storms, and is turned only into mire and dirt: even so fares it with many a professor: he is drawn up out of the earth, and above the pollutions of the world, by a common influence of the Holy Spirit, and for a while he hangs and hovers in a lofty profession; but having no firm basis to sustain him, he is either blown up as an empty cloud, and driven away by every wind of doctrine, and lost amongst various sects and opinions; or else, after a while, he falls back again into the filthy conversation and worldly pollutions that he had escaped, and ends only in mire and dirt, and this because he hath not that incorruptible seed within him that shall never die.

Indeed, true grace is of itself immortal; but it is from that engagement, that God hath laid upon himself to preserve it in those, who are diligent in the use of those means, by which it may be maintained. But an unregenerate man is left wholly to his own power, to preserve him in that station, in which he shines: and, if the angels themselves and Adam fell from their first estate, merely through the mutability of their own will, who had power to continue in it, how much more certainly then will these carnal professors fall from their high pitch, who have less power to enable them to stand, and greater power against them to cast them down!

To aggravate the exceeding great folly and apostasy of these elevated professors, see that most dreadful place, 2 Pet. ii. 21. "For it had been better for them not to have known the way of righteousness, than, after they have known it, to turn from the holy commandment delivered unto them." Is not the wrath of God certainly to be revealed against all those, who know not God, and obey not the Gospel of the Lord Jesus? It is better never to have known the Gospel, and never to have gone a step in the ways of God, than afterwards willfully to desert them and apostatize from them.

1. *The fall and apostasy of those, who are great and eminent professors, carries much of malice and willfulness in it, which is the highest rank that can be in any sin.*

If there be any in the world, that commit the unpardonable sin against the Holy Ghost, it must be these men. There is, indeed, a great difference between sinning willingly and sinning willfully: profane, carnal men sin willingly; but none, but those who have been forward professors in the ways of God, and have utterly deserted those ways, can sin maliciously, and merely because they will provoke and offend God by their sins. See what the Apostle saith of such, Heb. x. 26, 27: "For if we sin willfully, after that we have received the knowledge of the truth, there remaineth no more sacrifice for sins: but a certain fearful looking for of judgment and fiery indignation," &c. Heb. vi. 4-6: "For it is impossible for those who were once enlightened, and have tasted of the heavenly gift, and were made partakers of the Holy Ghost, and have tasted the good word of God, and the powers of the world to come, if they shall fall away, to renew them again unto repentance," &c.

2. *When elevated and eminent professors fall away, they usually fall lower than they were before, when they took their first rise towards Christianity and true religion.*

Falling away from a profession, is like the falling down from a steep precipice; where they can have nothing to stop them till they come to the very bottom. And it is observed, that none prove more notoriously wicked, and more desperate haters and revilers of the ways of God, than apostate professors.

(1) God doth judiciously give them up to commit all manner of sin with greediness. See that black catalogue of the foulest sins that can be imagined, Rom. i. 21-30. The Apostle speaks there concerning the heathen; but the case is parallel with our carnal professors, who do not like to retain God in their knowledge: therefore, "God gives them over to a reprobate mind, to do those things which are not convenient," &c.

(2) The devil takes possession of such men, with stronger power and force than ever; (as the unclean spirit re-entered with seven spirits worse than himself, Luke xi. 26;) to secure that soul, that hath been so likely to revolt from him; and therefore no wonder Christ saith, "the last state of that man is worse than the first." So that these eminent professors, when they fall away, usually fall lower than they ever were, before their first rise and motion towards religion.

(3) Unregenerate persons not only fall lower, but they seldom return to make a profession of their deserted religion: it is impossible to renew such a one to repentance again.

Now how should these sad and dreadful considerations make every one of us to do our utmost that we are able, to get true and saving grace, if we rest anywhere short of it! When the winds of temptation tempestuously beat, and the floods of trial, affliction, or persecution rush in upon us, we shall fall, because we have no foundation, but have built merely upon the sands. If you stand not built upon the corner-stone, you will fall of yourselves; yea, that stone will fall upon you, and crush and grind you to powder. Nay, you fall off from a steep and slippery precipice, where there is nothing at all to stop, nothing to receive you but sin after sin; and thus you rebound from one wickedness to another, till at last you be plunged irrecoverably into that lake, which burns with fire and brimstone.

V. THOUGH THESE PROFESSORS MAY HOVER BETWEEN HEAVEN AND EARTH IN THEIR LIVES, YET THEY SHALL NOT HOVER BETWEEN HEAVEN AND HELL IN THEIR DEATHS.

No: the half Christian shall be as infallibly and as certainly cast into hell, as those who were altogether wicked. Here, it may

be, thou art neither godly nor profane ; but, hercafter, thou must be either saved or damned. There is none, as the Papists picture Erasmus, that hang between heaven and hell. Whoever thou art, thou must be either in a state of nature or of grace ; and, accordingly, shall thy estate then be forever, either a state of salvation among the saints, or else a state of damnation with the unregenerate. Though thou art never so lofty and sublime a professor, yet the same hell, that holds the profane, must eternally hereafter hold thee too, if through thine own willful negligence, thou stop anywhere short of true grace. If the almost Christians could, by their glittering profession, gain a cooler hell ; if they could get, I say, but a cooler place in hell : if their profession could gain them this : if it could procure them purgatory for venial sins, or the moderate punishment which the Papists call *Limbus Patrum*, then they had some show of reason to rest where they are : but, when the same hell and the same everlasting fire must be the portion of those, who have proceeded so far, and yet fall short ; as well as the portion of the vilest wretch, whom they have now as far exceeded in goodness, as the holiest saint alive exceeds them ; it is the very height of folly and madness, to sit down anywhere short of true grace, unless they are fully resolved to sit down nowhere short of hell.

vi. It will be the insupportable aggravation of these men's just and everlasting condemnation, for them to lie grating upon this sad reflection in hell, THAT ONCE THEY WERE NEAR TO HEAVEN, BUT LOST IT THROUGH THEIR OWN WILLFUL DEFAULT.

It will be the aggravation, I say, of these men's just and everlasting condemnation, to make this doleful and furious reflection upon themselves in hell, that once they were in a very hopeful state, that they were once near to heaven, but lost it through their own willful default. When they shall lie in hell, and from thence give a sad and ghastly look up to the glory of the saints in heaven, Oh, how it will pierce their souls to think, that they were once near to that blessed estate, though now there be an infinite and impassable gulf between them and that blessed inheritance, which the saints enjoy in heaven ! Thus will they reflect upon themselves : " Though now there be an impassable gulf between me and heaven ; yet, once, there was but a step or two that parted us. Had I mortified but one lust more, had I opposed one temptation more, had I put up but one fervent prayer more ; possibly, I might now have been in heaven : but, O my cursed, cursed folly, when I was at the very gate and threshold of heaven, that even then I

should stop ; and, after the relinquishment of my lusts, and after all my progress in the ways of holiness, to return again to the commission of those sins in which I had formerly lived ; when I had already gone through the hardest and most difficult part of religion, then to break off my course ! What is this, but procuring for myself this damnation, which I now suffer, and must suffer forever ? Oh, that light, that once I enjoyed, how it thickens this everlasting darkness ! Oh, those tastes that I once had of the powers of the world to come, and relished so much sweetness in, how do they now embitter this cup of fury and trembling, of which I must forever drink ! Oh, those heavenly gifts, that once I had, do now but increase these hellish torments ; and the sight of heaven which I have had, now discovers to me what I have lost ; nay, what I have willfully thrown away through mine own sloth and negligence. Oh, how strange is mine apostasy ! after I had gone so great a way towards Christianity, rather than I would move one step further, I chose to lie here in this hell forever burning and consuming !” Oh, what sad and tormenting thoughts will these be ! how will they fret and gnaw the souls of those wretches, with eternal anguish and insupportable torments !

Thus you have seen, in these particulars, somewhat discovered to you of the desperate folly and madness, and misery also, of which men are guilty, who proceed so far as to be *almost*, and yet will not be persuaded to be *altogether* Christians.

A DISCOURSE

ON THE

NATURE, CORRUPTION, AND RENEWING OF THE CONSCIENCE.

Herein do I exercise myself, to have always a conscience void of offense toward God and toward men. ACTS xxiv. 16. .

INTRODUCTION.

IN this chapter, St. Paul gives an account to Felix of the general course and demeanor of his former life; being accused by Tertullian, a flattering orator, as one who was profane and seditious. After that he had purged himself in sundry particulars, he comes, in the text, to show, that he was far from those crimes that were laid to his charge; having made it his constant exercise, all his life-time, to keep a good conscience.

The words have little or no difficulty in them: and, therefore, instead of giving you an elaborate exposition, I shall only run them over with a brief paraphrase.

“Herein do I exercise myself:” that is, I make it my constant care and employment, “to have always a conscience void of offense:” that is, to keep my conscience clear, that it may not justly accuse me of any offense done either against God or against men: that is, I labor conscientiously to practice, as well the duties of the second, as the duties of the first table; to be just towards men, as well as to be religious towards God; knowing, that the one without the other, to be without offense towards men only is but mere morality, and to be without offense only towards God is but vain hypocrisy.

Without farther explication, the words do, of their own accord, deliver to us this doctrine:

THAT IT SHOULD BE OUR CONTINUAL CARE AND EMPLOYMENT, IN ALL THINGS, WHETHER RELATING TO GOD OR MAN, TO KEEP CLEAR AND INOFFENSIVE CONSCIENCES.

Conscience is nothing but a practical syllogism or argumentation; and always infers a personal conclusion, either excusing or accusing: and it hath three offices.

First. It discovers to us what is sin, and what is duty; and the reward, that is entailed upon both.

And thus it gives in its verdict according to that light that shines into it. If it hath only the twilight of nature to illustrate it, as the heathen had no other, then it can pass judgment only upon natural duties and unnatural sins: thus the consciences of heathen, through some reminders of original knowledge, informed them that worship was due to God and justice to men; and that all impieties against God and all injuries against men, should, in the end, be severely punished. But, if conscience enjoys the superadded light of Scripture, it judges then of those duties and those sins, that could only be known by divine revelation: hence it is, that conscience is enabled to form such a proposition as this: "He, that believeth, shall be saved: he, that believeth not, shall be damned:" this proposition it forms, not from natural light, but from the superinduced light of Scripture. This is the first direct act of conscience, whereby it pronounceth on men's works, whether they be sinful or not, and what the reward or punishment is that shall follow them, according as it finds it written in the dark and imperfect law of nature, or in the superadded law of God.

Secondly. When conscience hath thus pronounced whether the action be good or bad, and what reward or punishment belongs to it, its next office is, to witness and depose, that we have done such or such actions.

This is a reflex act, whereby, when conscience hath discovered what is sin and what is duty, it testifies, that, either we have performed the one, or that we have committed the other. The Scripture reveals, that faith shall be rewarded with eternal life, and unbelief punished with death eternal: hereupon conscience makes reflection upon itself, and applies the proposition: "But I believe, or I do not believe:" and that is its witnessing or deposing office.

Thirdly. It hath, besides this, the office of a judge, to acquit or condemn.

And this it doth, by inferring a comfortable or a terrifying conclusion from the former premises; applying the reward or the punishment to ourselves, according as those actions have been ours to which they belong. If it hath proved us unbelievers, straight it pronounceth us condemned persons; or if it evidences our faith to us, presently it justifies and acquits us. Hence it is, that wicked men are haunted with pale fears and ghastly reflections; because they are always malefactors arraigned at a bar: a bar that they

carry about with them in their own breasts; where they hear a thousand witnesses sworn and examined; where they hear their judge, ten thousand times a day, pronouncing them cursed and damned. And hence it is, also, that there is sometimes diffused into the hearts of God's children such sweet joy, such solid peace, such calm stayedness, and some prelibations of heavenly bliss; because they carry in their breasts a court of judicature, where their earthly judge, conscience, acquits them, and assures them that their heavenly judge will do so also.

This is conscience: that faithful register in every man's bosom, that writes down the actions, discourses, and cogitations of every hour and minute.

This being premised concerning the nature and offices of conscience, I shall come, in the next place, to inquire into these following particulars, into which I shall digest the method of this subject.

What it is, that doth corrupt and vitiate conscience.

What it is, to have a clear conscience.

Of what importance and consequence it is, that our consciences be kept clear and void of offense: under which, I shall give you the reasons of the point.

I shall lay down some rules and means, whereby we may attain unto and keep a pure and clean conscience.

I. WHAT IS IT, THAT DOTH CORRUPT AND VITIATE CONSCIENCE, IN EXECUTING ITS OFFICES.

i. IGNORANCE corrupts the conscience.

Conscience is the guide of life, and knowledge is the eye of conscience; and if this be darkened, the blind leads the blind till both fall into the ditch. Conscience is a guide, that leads apace; and, therefore, had need see its way before it: which some not being well able to discern, have wound themselves into inextricable wanderings; pursuing every glaring delusion; and running after every skipping light, that dances before it, till at last they have lost both themselves and their consciences too. How many are there, that have thus bewildered themselves in their own fancies and opinions; and so have fallen upon the precipice of damnable errors, and into bogs of mire and filthy lusts, only through an ignorant conscience and self-conceited pride that is always a companion of it! This ignorance fills the conscience

with false presumptions, and draws it to wrong determinations and conclusions ; which, though they seem to be but little mistakes in the notion, yet are most destructive and pernicious in a man's practice. As a small mistake, in the levelling of an arrow at the hand, makes a wide distance at the mark ; so a small mistake, in the notion of truth, makes a wide error in the practice of godliness. A mis-persuaded conscience usually gives rise to misguided zeal : and zeal, without knowledge, is but a religious frenzy, that fashions out to itself strange shapes of sin and duty, of good and evil ; and, usually, takes the one for the other, until it falls under that woe denounced by the prophet, Isa. v. 20 : " Woe unto them, that call evil good, and good evil ; that put darkness for light, and light for darkness ; that put bitter for sweet, and sweet for bitter."

Ignorance vitiates and corrupts the conscience two ways : either it makes it unnecessarily scrupulous ; or else, it makes it daringly presumptuous.

1. Ignorance fetters and binds up the conscience, *either to the doing of or abstaining from that, concerning which God hath laid no law and obligation at all upon it.*

This is an encroaching conscience, which makes that an enclosure, that God hath left common ; and rigorously exacts from us, what God hath permitted as indifferent. It is a very sad judgment, to be given up to the domineering impositions of a scrupulous conscience. Such a conscience as this is will certainly make much more sin, than ever the law made : for, whatever we do against the commands of conscience is sin, though it be not immediately and directly against the commands of God : Rom. xiv. 23. Now some there are, who do so needlessly pin and coop up themselves, that they cannot stir, nor moderately use that lawful liberty which God hath indulged them, but presently they are entangled in sin, because of the imperious prohibitions of their own consciences.

2. Sometimes, ignorance makes conscience licentious ; *indulging itself in those actions, that the law of God condemns ; making it daringly presumptuous.*

And this is a quite contrary extreme ; and yet, as opposite as these are, we oftentimes find them joined together in the same persons : the same persons, that have a needlessly scrupulous conscience, have also a daringly presumptuous conscience : and this proceeds from an ignorance of their due bounds and limits. Who, ordinarily, so profane, as the superstitious ? Their ignorance makes them scrupulous observers of little circumstances, and yet

bold adventurers upon notorious sins. What a strange wry conscience have such men; who tie up themselves strictly where God gives them scope, and yet run riotously where God's commands and threatenings restrain! dreading more the transgression of one law of man, than they do the transgression of the whole moral law of God! This is from ignorance; whereby men do not know the due bounds, either of that liberty which God indulgeth them, or that restraint which God lays upon them.

ii. WILLFUL SINNING corrupts and vitiates the conscience, in two ways.

1. Sometimes, such sins *stupefy and deaden the conscience*, especially if they become frequent and customary; and, therefore, we usually call them conscience-wasting sins.

Believe it, through a continued course of known and presumptuous sins, you will bring your consciences into very sad consumptions, that they will pine away under iniquities. And how many are there, who have their consciences already lying speechless, senseless, and gasping; ready to give up the ghost! The Apostle, in Eph. iv. 19, speaks of them, that "being past feeling, have given themselves over unto lasciviousness."

2. Sometimes, such sins do *affright, terrify, and enrage the conscience*; filling it with dreadful thoughts of eternal, future vengeance.

Willful and known sins sometimes terrify and enrage the conscience. And this is a corruption of the conscience, when the terrors of it are so overwhelming, as to sink men into despair: for, mark it, it is its office to accuse and to threaten for sin; and, the greater the sin is, the more sharp and stinging ought to be its reproofs: but, be the sin never so great for which conscience reproves, if yet it denounceth wrath without making mention of repentance and hopes of mercy, it exceeds its commission that God hath given it, and becomes an evil and corrupt conscience. And, therefore, we have that expression, Heb. x. 22: "Let us draw near.... having our hearts sprinkled from an evil conscience." By an "evil conscience," here, is meant a despairing conscience; from which we are freed, only by the blood of sprinkling: to be convinced of sin, and not at all to be convinced of righteousness, is such a conviction, as constitutes one part of the torments of the damned in hell, whose worm never dies; and, certainly, that conscience must needs be very evil and very corrupt, which breeds in it this hellish worm, while we are here upon earth.

II. The next thing propounded, is, to show you, WHAT IT IS TO HAVE A CLEAR CONSCIENCE.

There are two things, that denominate a conscience to be clear; when it is pure, and when it is peaceable: when it is free from all known and willful defilements, and when it is not justly burdened with the guilt of sin, then is it a clear conscience.

1. Then a man hath a clear conscience, WHEN IT IS FREE FROM ALL KNOWN AND WILLFUL SINS.

I say, from all known and willful sins: for it is impossible while we are encompassed about with infirmities and oppressed with a heavy body of sin and death, to keep ourselves free and pure from all sin: "For in many things we offend all," says St. James: ch. iii. 2. But these sins of daily weakness and sudden surprises, as they are usually small sins and scarce discernible, so are they no obstructions to a clear conscience; no more than the motes of the sunbeams are obstructions to a clear day. As for those daily weaknesses and sins of daily infirmity, they neither leave guilt nor defilement upon the conscience of God's children: but, as their more foul sins are done away by particular acts of repentance; so these are done away by a general state of repentance, in which state the children of God always are: and there is also a constant outflowing of the blood of Christ and of the mercy of God upon the soul, to remove the guilt and filth of those sins as we fall into them. Then is the conscience clear, when, all former sins being pardoned to us, we daily labor to please God: though it be with manifold imperfections and weaknesses, this doth not hinder but that our consciences may be both pure and peaceable: while we thus sincerely strive to keep ourselves from all willful and from all presumptuous sins, our consciences are clear, notwithstanding the sins of daily infirmity. So says the Psalmist, Ps. xix. 13: "Keep back thy servant from presumptuous sins..... then shall I be upright, and I shall be innocent from the great transgression."

ii. Then a man hath a clear conscience, WHEN IT IS NOT JUSTLY BURDENED WITH THE GUILT OF SIN.

I say, not justly burdened; because sometimes we may burden ourselves without cause, when God hath already forgiven us. Many times, through temptations and desertions, God's children reflect upon their old sins with new troubles, and tear open their

old wounds and make them bleed afresh. They remember against themselves, what God hath forgotten; and, with great terrors, accuse and condemn themselves, for what God hath already remitted to them.

Here I shall lay down two things.

That every quiet conscience is not a clear conscience.

That every troubled conscience is not an evil conscience.

1. *Every quiet conscience is not a clear conscience.*

Some are lulled asleep in security; and their consciences are quiet, merely because they are insensible: it may be, they have so harassed and wasted their consciences by dreadful sins, so often mortally wounded them, that now they have not strength enough to become quarrelsome and troublesome; and this they call peace: indeed, it is such a peace as Galgathus reproaches the Romans with in Tacitus; when they had laid all waste, then they called it peace: so these sinners think they have good and peaceable consciences, because they do not menace, torment, and worry them; and, alas! how can they? Their consciences are murdered: there is no sense nor life left in them. This is no peace, but a mere solitude and desolation of conscience: and, yet, believe it too, these quiet and peaceable consciences will not be long so: at the hour of death, or if not then, the next moment after death, these peaceable consciences will be startled out of their sleep, and will roar so loud, that heaven and hell shall hear them. As, in still weather, many times, matter is gathering for a storm; so, while conscience seems so still and quiet, it is only gathering matter for a tempest, that will one day pour upon your heads. And oh, how grievous will it be, when those consciences, that never gave them an ill word before, shall on a sudden drag them before the tribunal of God, and there bitterly accuse them of those horrid sins that once they seemed to take no notice of, and call for the severest execution of divine wrath and vengeance upon them! And, possibly, many, that speak of the peace of their consciences, do not find it so neither: they are as far from a peaceable conscience, as they are from a raving and a raging conscience. A raving conscience soon discovers itself in hellish despair: but there are many, whose consciences do not rave, and yet are never quiet: they give them many a secret twitch and gird at the very heart, not outwardly discernible by others: as thunder rumbles along in the entrails of a cloud, that never breaks forth into dreadful and terrible cracks; so a man may have a rumbling and a grumbling conscience, a conscience that may murmur and scowl upon him, and yet he may

carry it as if all were calm and serene within him: however though all within may be quiet, yet a quiet conscience may be a polluted conscience; as a standing puddle may be as foul as the raging sea, when it casts out its mire and filth.

2. As every quiet conscience is not a clear conscience, so *every troubled conscience is not an evil conscience.*

Hypocrites and wicked men may indeed, and do often, so judge: "Would God ever suffer such strange terrors to seize upon men, were they not notorious sinners?" As those barbarians at Malta, spoken of in the Acts, when they saw the viper fasten upon the Apostle's hand, presently concluded that he was some wicked person, whom divine vengeance would not suffer to live: so these men, when they see the worm of conscience fasten upon others, presently judge them guilty of notorious crimes; crimes, for which the vengeance and wrath of God pursue them. But this is a wrong censure, and most unjust. For the most part it is seen, that those, that have the best consciences, are most troubled, at least for a time; until the Holy Ghost persuade them of the love of God, and of the pardon of their sins. It is the greatest fault of a tender conscience, that it misinterprets every thing against itself: and, oftentimes, when God rejoices over it, it apprehends that he frowns upon it; mistaking the firing of a bonfire for the firing of a beacon, and giving an alarm when they should proclaim peace and joy; many times it is so with them that have tender consciences. A man may be long troubled for those sins, that are already pardoned to him: Nathan comes to David, and, upon his confession that he had sinned, 2 Sam. xii. 13: "I have sinned," says he: God by Nathan tells him, that he had put away his sin from him; and yet his conscience, though it were clear in respect of any guilt that God charged upon him, yet was not clear in respect of what he himself charged upon himself: he thought himself guilty in his own apprehension, as you may perceive by his penning of the 51st Psalm; yet he was not guilty in God's account, for he assures him, by his prophet, that he had pardoned him.

QUEST. "Now it being so, that both a quiet conscience may be impure, and that a troubled conscience may be a clear conscience, how shall we know whether, when our consciences are troubled, it be from the guilt of sin remaining upon them; or whether, when they be clear and quiet, it be from the removal of that guilt?" In reply,

First: It may be known when a man's conscience is troubled

from the guilt of sin remaining upon it, by considering the *effects* of this trouble. Doth he find, that, when conscience is disquieted, he is apt to shift off the trouble by diverting it, and doing what he can to lull it asleep? Doth he neglect prayer, reading the Word, and other duties and means that God hath appointed to bring him to a true repentance for his sin? If it be so, this man hath great cause to fear, that the trouble of his conscience proceeds from the impurity and defilement of it. Where God will save the soul, this trouble of conscience works in another manner, and stirs up a man to pray, to hear, to meditate upon God's word, where his condition will be stated to his hand; to follow God in all his ways and ordinances, making him restless till he come to know that his sins are pardoned, and his wounds healed and closed up by the blood of Jesus Christ. Many there are, in whom the troubles of conscience never produce any good effects; but all their care is, how they may divert all troublesome and disquieting thoughts from themselves; and so they wear off convictions: now this trouble can never produce any saving effect; and is itself produced merely from that corroding and gnawing guilt, that lies upon conscience, which a true and genuine trouble is a means by God appointed to remove.

Secondly. "How may a man know, when conscience is quiet, whether it be quieted upon God's grounds, because the guilt of sin is removed from it?"

To this I answer: It must be considered, whether quietness of conscience comes after trouble: and, if conscience be quiet after trouble, then you must consider how it came to be quieted. Did you wear it away with other businesses? Or, did you seek God by prayer, and application of the promises to yourselves? Did you, in the way of God, obtain peace? Now if a man's quietness, that he hath, be enjoyed after trouble, and if obtained in God's way, that way which he hath appointed to still and quiet the conscience, you may then satisfy yourself in it. But, when you never have been troubled, or having been troubled have worn it off, you may be assured such a peace of conscience is far worse and more dangerous, than the most horrid troubles and disquietudes of conscience can be.

III. I come now to the third general head propounded; and that was, to show you, OF WHAT GREAT IMPORTANCE, AND OF WHAT BENEFICIAL CONSEQUENCE IT IS, TO KEEP OUR CONSCIENCES CLEAR AND INOFFENSIVE.

And, in speaking unto this, I shall, at once, both give you the reasons of the point, why it should be our continual endeavor to keep clear consciences; and, also, give you motives to persuade you to the duty. I shall name only six.

i. A clear conscience is THE MOST COMFORTABLE RELIEF UNDER FALSE REPROACHES AND ASPERSIONS, THAT ARE CAST UPON US.

A good conscience is in our own power alone; but, it is in the power of every slanderous tongue, to blast a good name: and, indeed, it is a thing almost impossible, to keep at once both a good conscience and a good name. The world is shattered and fractured into so many parties, and each of them of such different relishes of good and bad, that, unless our actions suit the universal taste, as according to the Rabbins' tradition, the Israelites' manna had, that it had the taste of that which they best fancied; we must of necessity fall under mis-constructions, censures, and defamations. For, indeed, if we observe it, it is usually our similitude to others that makes them think and speak well of us: whosoever commends another, commends him for somewhat, that he supposeth at least he hath in himself: and this is the reason of that woe, which our Saviour denounceth, Luke vi. 26. "Woe unto you, when all men shall speak well of you." When wicked men shall speak well of us, it is a sign that we are but too too like them: even a heathen could say, when he was highly applauded by the vulgar rabble, "What evil have I done, that these men praise me?" the very reproaches of ungodly men are the best testimonials that can be given of an excellent and singular Christian. In a strict and holy conversation, there is that contradiction to the loose profaneness of the world, as, at once, both convinces and offends them, reproves them and galls them: and if, as we ought, we thus reproach them by our lives, we must expect that they will again reproach us by their lying slanders. It is a sinful tenderness of our esteem among men, when we tack about to every popular breath that blows: such must needs prefer the praise of men, before the praise of God. And, let me tell you, this is as fruitless, as it is sinful; since this wind will always blow from contrary points: while some extol us, others will as much vilify and scorn us. It is miserable to live upon the reports and opinions of others: let us not reckon what they say, but what reports our own consciences make: it is far better to offend the whole world, than God and conscience: and, if a storm of obloquy and reproaches, railings and curses, do at any time patter upon us; how sweet then is it, to retire inward into the calm.

innocency of our own hearts! there, a thousand witnesses will tell us, we have not deserved them: how comfortable is it, to commit our cause to God; and leave our vindication to him, for whose sake we suffer reproach! Thus Jeremiah appeals to "God, Jer. xx. 10, 12: "I have heard the defaming of many....Report, say they, and we will report it:" that is, let us raise a disgraceful and reproachful report of him: "But," says he, "O Lord of Hosts, that triest the righteous, and seest the reins and the heart....unto thee have I opened my cause." Thus, if, while wicked men are maliciously conspiring how to blot and sully our names, we can but keep our consciences clear; what need we much trouble ourselves how the wind blows abroad, since we are harbored under the retreat of a peaceful heart. They may, possibly, persuade others to believe their calumnies; but they can never persuade God to believe them: He, who searcheth the heart and conscience, knows that we are injured; and he is hastening forward a day, wherein he will clear up our righteousness: and, then, the testimony of a good conscience shall put ten thousand slanderers to silence.

ii. A clear conscience, as it enables a man to bear reproaches from others with patience, SO IT GIVES HIM AN ADVANTAGE TO REPROVE OTHERS WITH AUTHORITY.

It is a true rule, that he, who reproves another, ought himself to be free from the fault which he reproves: for, otherwise, the reproof neither comes with freedom from the reprover, nor with efficacy to the reprovèd.

1. *A reproof, that comes from a guilty conscience, is but stammering and timorous.*

Such a man's own conscience must needs rise up in his throat, and choke his reproofs. Consciousness of the same miscarriages will retort whatsoever we can say against others, more forcibly against ourselves; and will suggest to us, that it is but a base piece of hypocrisy, to blame that which we ourselves practice. With what face canst thou press others to repent and reform? What arguments canst thou use, who, by continuing in the same sins, dost thyself judge that those arguments are of no force! Thus conscience suggests; and, thereby, tongue-ties reproof.

2. *This too makes reproofs ineffectual.*

It were a temper to be wished and prayed for, that we could only respect how righteous the reproof is, and not how righteous the person is that gives it; and be content to have the motes plucked out of our eyes, though it be by such as have beams in

their own eyes. For, indeed, there is no more reason to reject sound admonition, because it comes from an unsound heart, than there is to stop our ears against good counsel, because it is delivered perhaps by an offensive breath. Yet so it is, that, when men of defiled consciences and conversations reprove others, they are apt to think, either that they are not in earnest, and do but personate what they speak; or, else, that they envy them their sins, and would engross all to themselves; and so the reproof takes no place upon them. But, when a man of a clear and unspotted conscience reproves wicked men, his reproof breaks in upon them with conviction and authority; and, if it doth not reform, it must at least daunt and silence them. "Here is one, that reproveth me for sin, who doubtless believes it to be evil, by his own avoiding it. Here is one, that denounceth wrath if I repent not, who doubtless believes it to be as terrible as he represents it, by his own carefulness to escape it." And, thus, a clear conscience hath a great advantage to reprove sinners with success; at least to work conviction, if not amendment in them.

iii. A clear conscience GIVES US BOLDNESS OF ACCESS UNTO GOD.

Guilt abashes the soul, and makes it both ashamed and afraid to appear in the presence of God: and therefore Adam, as soon as he had sinned against his Maker, presently hides himself from him. We may observe in ourselves, what a slavish dejectedness seizeth us when we come to God in duty, after we have wronged him by any known sin: we come to him suspiciously; and with such a misgiving fear, as if we would not have God take notice that we are before him; and are still in pain, till the duty be over. But, when our consciences are clear, oh, with what delight do we haste to God, and with what content do we stay with him! How doth the soul dilate and spread itself under the smiles of God, beating full upon it! "Lo, O Lord, here is a heart, that I labor to make and keep void of offense: do thou fill it with thy promised grace and Spirit. It is not, indeed, a mansion pure enough for the pure and holy God; yet is it such, as thou wilt accept, and in which thou wilt dwell. There are still many hidden corruptions in it, but do thou search them out; and thou, who hast kept thy servant from presumptuous sins, do thou also cleanse me from secret faults." Thus a clear conscience, with a holy and reverend boldness, addresseth itself to God; and sweetly closeth up every duty and every prayer, with full assurance of obtaining mercy from God.

So the Apostle, Heb. x. 22: "Let us draw near.....in full assurance of faith:" how may we gain this full assurance, when we draw near to God? by "having our hearts sprinkled from an evil conscience:" get but a pure and clear conscience, and that will enable you to draw near to God in full assurance of faith. And so, in the like parallel place, 1 John iii. 21: "Beloved, if our heart condemn us not, then have we confidence towards God:" if conscience be not evil to accuse us, then have we confidence towards God: when the face of a man's conscience looks cheerful, and hath not a frown nor a wrinkle upon it, this makes us joyfully to apprehend that God's face towards us is serene also, and that we shall be welcome at all times into our Father's presence: this conscience suggests to us, and makes us come with a holy, yet with an awful boldness unto God.

iv. A clear conscience is THE SWEETEST BOSOM FRIEND, WITH WHICH WE MAY AT ALL TIMES FREELY AND INTIMATELY CONVERSE.

Wicked men, indeed, of all company in the world, dread and hate themselves most; they have a lowering, rumbling conscience within, that always threatens and disquiets them; and, therefore, they love to keep abroad: soliloquies and heart-discourses are a very torment to them; and they wonder that the Psalmist should ever bid them "commune with their own heart and be still;" as it is in Psalm iv. 4: they are never less still, than when they discourse awhile with their own consciences; which, upon many high provocations given them, are grown so quarrelsome, and do so thunder out woes and curses against them, and so hurl about swords, firebrands, and death, that they dare not so much as once look within doors. But a Christian, whose conscience is clean and clear, finds it the best companion in the world: in his solitudes and retirements, with what delight doth he call his own heart aside! There he and his God, sweetly and peaceably confer together; and there pass mutual endearments and embraces: the soul embraces and clasps about God, with the arms of faith and dependence; and God embraces the soul, with the arms of his everlasting love. Here is mutual communication of secrets: the soul unlocks the secrets of its own conscience before God; and God, again, reveals the secrets of his own love to the soul. Here are mutual rejoicings: the soul rejoiceth in God, its Saviour; and God rejoiceth over the soul, to do it good. And, under these intercourses of love and favor, the soul is ready to faint away, and to dissolve with sweetness and delight. This is that continual feast,

with which a good conscience entertains a Christian, where all is transacted with a noiseless mirth.

v. A clear conscience is THE BEST COMFORT AND SUPPORT, WHEN FEARS, AND TROUBLES, AND DANGERS, ARE ON EVERY SIDE.

It is a most blessed thing when trouble is without, to have peace within, in our own bosom; to be then at peace with God and ourselves. And therefore saith Christ, John xvi. 33: "These things have I spoken unto you, that in me ye might have peace. In the world ye shall have tribulation." A Christian is a man made up of paradoxes: he is "sorrowful, yet alway rejoicing: as poor, yet making many rich: as having nothing, and yet possessing all all things;" 2 Cor. vi. 10. And so, here, he hath tribulation in the world, and yet is at peace. When once that great and bloody quarrel between God and the soul, is taken up and compounded; when we are reconciled to God, and thereby our consciences become reconciled to us; all the enmity and persecutions of the world are but little pelting differences, which cannot disturb the solid and inviolate peace of a Christian. This is a peace, which as the friendship of the world cannot give, so neither can the enmity of the world take away. My "peace I leave with you: my peace I give unto you.....Let not your hearts be troubled:" John xiv. 27. It is observable concerning Josiah, 2 Kings xxii. 20, that God promiseth him by the mouth of Huldah the prophetess, that he should "be gathered into his grave in peace:" and yet, in the very next chapter, v. 29, it is related, that he was slain in the wars that he undertook against Pharaoh-Necho, King of Egypt: he was slain in war, and yet he died in peace: and no wonder; for whosoever dies in peace with God and his own conscience, dies peaceably, though he die in the midst of wars and tumults.

vi. A clear conscience AFFORDS SWEET AND UNSPEAKABLE COMFORT IN A DYING HOUR.

When all things must take their last leave of us, and we of them; when death sets all its terrors in array against us; oh what a blessed support will it then be to the departing soul, to be able to make its appeal, as Hezekiah did! Isa. xxxviii. 3: "Remember now, O Lord, I beseech thee, how I have walked before thee in truth, and with a perfect heart, and have done that which is good in thy sight." Such a testimony, at such a time, is as much worth as heaven itself. This is to have heaven let down into us one

hour, and to be ourselves taken up into heaven the next. Now, possibly, men may frolic away their days in sin and vanity, and live as though they should never give an account: but that day and hour are coming, wherein conscience will begin to open its eyes, when their friends stand ready about them to close up theirs: and then it will see those horrid shapes of death and hell and wrath eternal, which, while they were secure sinners, they never believed, and, now that they are awakened sinners, (and alas! possibly too late awakened) they cannot escape. If, therefore, you would have peace and comfort in death, be sure you cherish a good conscience in your life. You may now, indeed, bribe it to give in a false and flattering testimony; but, when eternity is in view, it will then speak truth. And, oh! thrice happy they, to whom a true conscience becomes then an excusing conscience.

IV. The next thing propounded was, to give you some RULES and DIRECTIONS how you may get, and also how you may keep, clear and inoffensive consciences.

OBJECT. But you will say, "It is in vain to give rules for that, which is impossible to be done. Doth not Solomon challenge all the world upon this point, Prov. xx. 9? 'Who can say, I have made my heart clean, I am pure from my sin?' Never did the raging sea cast up more mire and filth, than the heart of man doth; and, as soon may we empty the vast waters of the great deep, and scour the bottom of it from all its dirt and mud, as attempt to keep conscience clear, into which a sinful heart is continually emptying and pouring its filth and mire."

To this I answer: were it impossible, yet there is no release to our obligation. We are commanded to be holy even as God is holy, whose infinite purity is such, as stains the heavens themselves, and puts the glorious angels out of countenance. This perfection is much more impossible for us, who are but lumps of dirt mingled and kneaded together with sin, than for a thick clod of earth to be as transparent as the sun that shines: but yet these excessive commands have a use in them, even to raise up our endeavors to a higher pitch and strain, than if we were commanded only somewhat that were within our own power; as he, that aims at a star, is like to shoot higher, than he, that aims only at a turf. Thus, though it were impossible to keep clean consciences, "void of offense both toward God and toward men," according to the exact-

ness of God's command; yet he, that is careful to avoid all pollutions, both of flesh and spirit, shall certainly have a much cleaner conscience by far, than he, that wallows in those sins. In a foul way it is perhaps impossible to keep ourselves from being bespattered with dirt; yet he that walks warily and carefully, comes cleaner home, than he, that tumbles and rolls himself in it. But this duty is not impossible. It is, indeed, difficult to keep a clear conscience; but, yet, it is a thing that is feasible.

i. And, IN GENERAL, there are two ways to keep our consciences clear: either, by preserving them from being defiled; or, else, by cleansing them when they are defiled.

1. We may keep our consciences clear, *by preserving them from being defiled.*

You will say, "How can this be? Is there any man living, 'that doeth good, and sinneth not?' And doth not every sin leave behind it a spot and stain upon the face of conscience? How then can we keep them clear?"

I answer: Sins are of two sorts: there are sins, that are crimes; and there are sins, that are but faults. Crimes, I call those sins, that are branded for infamous both by God and man; as murder, adultery, blasphemy, and the like, at which even natural conscience recoils; such carnal sins, as affright conscience, and make it look pale and ghastly: a crime, I also call any sin, the guilt of which is aggravated by conscious and willful commission. By faults, I mean sins of daily infirmity, and such as do frequently surprise the best and holiest Christians; from which no man's piety nor watchfulness can secure him. Now, though we be overtaken with faults, and every day and hour contract new and fresh guilt upon our consciences; yet we may have clear and good consciences, while we are careful to keep ourselves from crimes; from all sins, that are so in their own nature by the horridness of the fact, and from all sins that are made so by the intensifying circumstances of being deliberate and willful; while we keep ourselves from these we have good consciences, notwithstanding sins of ordinary weakness: that man hath a good conscience, who preserves himself from all infamous and gross sins, and from all other willful and deliberate sins. Now this clearness of conscience is a thing possible to be attained: men may, with care and caution, keep themselves free from all self-condemning crimes; and may live so evenly, that, when their consciences are most peevish and touchy, yet they shall have nothing of which to accuse them, but

what is common to all men. Of such men as these, this we may affirm, that they have been able with joy to reflect upon their past lives in a dying hour; who, possibly, never knew any other guilt by themselves, than that unto which the sins of common and daily infirmity have exposed them. This it is, to keep good consciences. "We live well," says St. Austin, "if we live without crimes: to live without fault is impossible; and he, that thinks he doth it, keeps himself not from sin, but from pardon."

2. Another way to keep our consciences clear, is, *by cleansing them when they are defiled.*

He keeps his garments clean, who keeps himself from falling; and, in the next degree, he, who, being fallen, hastes to cleanse himself from his contracted filth. And thus, at least, we may keep our consciences clear, both from crimes and from faults also, while we labor to cleanse them from their defilements, and to rub out and wash away those spots with which at any time we are occasionally bespattered. There is a twofold blot, which sin leaves behind it: there is a blot of discredit, and a blot of defilement. The former is indelible: as the scar remains, when the wound is healed: so this blot remains upon the soul, when the guilt of sin is removed: it is a discredit to a malefactor, though pardoned, that ever he should do that which deserved death: and so, it is a kind of blot upon a Christian's name forever, to have committed those sins that have deserved eternal death, though, through the free mercy and unspeakable grace of God, he hath obtained the pardon of them. But, then, there is another blot, a blot of defilement, that renders men loathsome and deformed in the eyes of God: and, thus, every sin that we commit leaves a blot and a stain upon the soul; a stain, that defaceth God's image, and that defiles our own consciences: and, when this stain and blot is cleansed, then are we said to have clear consciences, when we have taken off that blot and defilement that sin hath left whereby we are rendered deformed in the sight of God, and whereby the image of God is defaced upon the soul.

ii. Now to help you, in both these cases, I shall lay down SEVERAL PARTICULARS.

1. If you would have your consciences clear, *get them rightly informed.*

How can conscience be clear, so long as the fogs and thick mists of ignorance and error possess it? Labor, therefore, to let spiritual light into it, that you may see how to cleanse it. It is as much

vanity to go about to cleanse an ignorant conscience, as it is in vain to sweep a dark room. An ignorant conscientious man, that knows not the limits of sin and duty, may after a great deal of pother with his conscience, leave it much worse than he found it; and cast out jewels, instead of rubbish. Indeed, it is impossible for an ignorant man to have a good conscience, whether we respect duty or comfort: in point of duty, I have showed you formerly, that ignorance will make conscience unnecessarily scrupulous, or daringly presumptuous: neither can an ignorant conscience be good in respect of comfort; because, through ignorance, conscience oftentimes quarrels at that, which is a true ground of rejoicing. Conscience is that glass, whereby we may view both ourselves and our actions: now as a glass, when falsely framed, represents a beautiful face monstrous and frightful; so conscience, when falsely informed, makes even lovely actions appear misshapen and terrifying, by distorted representations of those things that are lawful, and perhaps our duty also. Therefore, in the first place, get an enlightened conscience, if you would get a good conscience: for what says Solomon, Prov. xix. 2? "That the soul be without knowledge, it is not good;" or, as some translations have it, "a soul without knowledge is not good:" it is, indeed, good for nothing, unless it be to make men sin conscientiously; and to embolden them to commit the greatest wickedness in the world, with peace and comfort. Thus, says our Saviour, John xvi. 2: "Who-soever killeth you will think that he doeth God service," through the error and mistake of their conscience. So, in 1 Cor. ii. 8: "Had they known it, they would not have crucified the Lord of Glory."

Knowledge improves the conscience in two ways.

(1) It gives it *direction*, what to choose and what to avoid: it instructs it to discern between good and evil.

Ignorant persons often mistake the one for the other; and eschew, what they should follow: or, if they chance to do that which is good, as it is not of great worth to do good only by chance and hazard; so they sin also, in doing good: while the judgment is in suspense, the conscience must needs be under guilt. If I know not whether I ought to do an action or to forbear, which way soever I take I am entangled in sin; "for whatsoever is not of faith is sin:" that is, whatsoever is done with a wavering conscience, that I know not whether it be sinful or not, that thereby becomes sin; and, whatever a man doth doubtingly, he is damned if he

doth it: he, that eateth doubtingly, says the Apostle, "is damned if he eat:" Rom. xiv. 23.

(2) Knowledge gives the conscience *strength* to enforce us to the doing of that, which it discovers to be good; and to the flight from that, which it discovers to be evil.

A knowing person cannot sin so easily as an ignorant man may; but he must struggle and wrestle harder, and offer more violence by far to his own conscience: a man, that sees his danger before him, will hardly be dragged unto precipices; whereas one, that is blind, is easily led thither suspecting nothing: so, here, a knowing person, that sees the danger of hell and damnation before him, if he sins it must be with a great deal of inward reluctance: an enlightened conscience struggles, and withholds him; and, if temptation be so violent as to wrest him out of the hand of conscience, how is he racked and torn in pieces between conscience and temptations! And, when conscience hath lost its hold, still it pursues him; and follows him to his sin; and disturbs his pleasure; and embitters that sweetness, that he thought to have found in sin before; and never leaves its clamors, till it hath, at least by a hypocritical and formal repentance, and by engagements to be more observing of the commands of conscience for the future, satisfied and appeased it. This force conscience hath, when it is duly informed with knowledge. But, where ignorance hath blinded it, it suffers men quietly to rush upon God's neck, and "upon the thick bosses of his buckler;" Job xv. 26: it sees not, neither respects any danger, when it is even on the very brink of hell: an ignorant conscience is like a benighted or bewildered traveller, which, because it cannot see its own way before it, what is to be chosen and what is to be refused, lays the reins upon the neck of men's lusts, and suffers them without control to take their own course. And, therefore, if you would have good consciences, get them rightly informed, with the knowledge of what is sin and what is duty.

2. If you would have a clear conscience, then *cast out the filth of conscience by a daily and frequent confession.*

Confession, one of the Fathers calls "the vomit of the soul," whereby it easeth itself when it is over-charged and glutted with sin and guilt: and so the Scripture also speaks, when the Apostle speaks of apostates relapsing into their old sins: in 2 Pet. ii. 22, he saith, they return with the dog to his vomit; that is, they return and do again lick up those sins, which before they disgorged and cast up by confession. This, indeed, is the way, when conscience

is burdened with the guilt of any sin : when sin lies indigested and heavy within, go then and pour out your heart before the Lord in the confession of your sin. See what sudden ease this will bring to your conscience. David was sin-sick, and he resolves upon this course : "I acknowledged my sin unto thee, and mine iniquity have I not hid. I said, I will confess my transgressions unto the Lord, and thou forgavest the iniquity of my sin:" Ps. xxxii. 5. His conscience obtained relief immediately. Are our consciences oppressed with the burden and weight of great and numberless sins ? Here we may, by an humble and penitent confession, unload them all before God. And this is the mystery of confession : the way to unload our sins from off us, is, to take them upon ourselves : when we charge ourselves with them and impute them to ourselves, God will not impute them to us, but charge them upon Christ ; for he hath promised, "If we would judge ourselves, we should not be judged," 1 Cor. xi. 31 : thus, in 2 Sam. xii. 13 : as soon as David had, by an humble confession, taken his sin to himself, saying, "I have sinned ;" God, by the prophet, tells him, "The Lord also hath put away thy sin." And, indeed, have we not found it thus by manifold experience, that, when conscience hath been bowed down by the insupportable weight of the guilt of sins, a sorrowful and ingenuous confession of them unto God hath lightened the burden ? And whereas, before, conscience was heavy and gloomy ; now, it looks cheerfully upon us, under the apprehensions of God's pardoning grace, that God will pardon and forgive them to us ? Now this easing of our consciences by confessions must be frequently reiterated : our consciences are always filling with sin and guilt, and therefore we must be always casting of it out by confession : as, in the emptying of a pond, where there are many streams rising and bubbling up, if we stop and intermit the work, the pond grows presently full again ; truly our hearts and consciences are like such ponds, in which there are many corrupt streams still sprouting up : now confession is the laving of it out, which if we do but a while intermit, our consciences again grow as full of sin and guilt as ever ; and, therefore, there must be a frequent and daily confession of sin, yea our confession must be reiterated as often as we fall into and commit any sin.

I might also add, that an effectual means to keep the conscience clear, is *frequently to wash it with repenting tears* : but, because unfeigned confession of sin doth also include and suppose a

penetintial frame of heart, I shall not, therefore, insist upon this as a particular head.

3. In the third place, therefore, if you would keep your consciences clear and inoffensive, then *labor to get a mean and low esteem of the world.*

The inordinate love of the present world is utterly inconsistent with a good conscience. What is it, that makes so many offer violence to their consciences, to stretch and rack them to any base compliance or sinful practice, but only that they may thereby gain some secular advantage, or that they may thereby avoid some worldly inconvenience? This is that, which fills the world with fraud and cozenage, with rapine and extortion, while all tug hard to get from one another, although they lose their consciences in the scuffle. This is that, which makes men so often shift their sails, that they may run before every wind that blows. If times grow rough and tempestuous, and they must throw overboard either their gain or their godliness, this inordinate love of the world persuades them to make shipwreck of faith and a good conscience, only that they may bear up in the world. Now they, who have but a low and mean esteem of the world, such as it deserves, escape this temptation: and they can, with a holy generosity, scorn to prostitute their consciences and to barter their precious souls for the gain of any of these fading and perishing riches here below; riches, that perish in the using. If, therefore, you would keep good consciences, learn to despise the threats and frowns, the flatterings and fawnings, of this world: look upon it as of no great concernment to you, whatever in adversity or prosperity can happen to you in this short and frail life: reflect upon those, who groan under the terrors of a wounded conscience: all the world cannot give them one moment's ease or comfort: yea, had they the whole world at their disposal they would give it all to procure peace, yea but a truce for awhile with their own consciences; such a vain and contemptible thing is the world, in comparison of inward tranquillity and serenity of mind. Now thus to rate the world below the peace and quietness of our own consciences, is an excellent means to preserve them clear and peaceable.

4. If you would keep conscience clear, *labor, above all things, to strengthen your faith.* Faith is a purifying grace. Acts xv. 9: "Purifying their hearts by faith."

Now faith hath a double influence to purify the heart or conscience.

(1) *A historical faith* keeps the conscience clear and pure; and that morally. I call that faith historical, which hath for its object the whole revealed truth of God: and it is nothing but a firm, undoubting assent to the verity and certainty of whatever is contained in the Holy Scriptures; upon no other account and reason, than merely the authority and veracity of God, who is the author of it. This faith, though it be not justifying, as the Papists hold, yet is it of a mighty influence to sanctify the heart, and to keep the conscience and conversation inoffensive. And this it doth in a moral way: for, did but men believe that heaven is so inconceivably glorious, sparkling with light, flowing with pleasure, resounding with praises, a place where joy and bliss ever dwell, and where we shall dwell too in an endless eternity in the smiles and love of God, if now but for a few short years we strive to live holily; did we but as really believe these things to be true and certain, as we know those things to be true and certain that we see with our very eyes, what manner of Christians would this force us to be in all holiness and godliness of conversation, cleansing ourselves from all pollutions both of flesh and spirit! Wherefore is it, that the promise of some temporal reward, the hope of some mean preferment from some great person, is of force sufficient to make men obsequious to them; and yet the promises, that God himself hath made of heaven and glory (in comparison of which to promise crowns and scepters, is but to promise pebbles and gewgaws,) work so little effect upon the generality of men, to allure them from sin to a holy life? Whence is it, but that men believe not that heaven is so glorious as the Scripture describes it to be? Nay, indeed, if they would speak their minds, they are not yet sure whether there be a heaven or not: it is from their unbelief: did men but believe the insupportable wrath of God, those horrors and torments, that fire and sulphur, that stench and darkness, those burning chains and those fiery whips, the woe and anguish of the damned in hell, which are as far from being utterable as they are from being tolerable, did they as certainly believe these things, as if they believe them not they shall certainly feel them, would they dare still to venture on to treasure up wrath to themselves "against the day of wrath?" Would they still dare, by wounding their consciences now, to enrage them to their own wounding and smart forever hereafter? Would they dare to do it, did they believe these things? Did they but believe that conscience will be revenged sevenfold on them for all the wrongs and violence that they have done it; that this worm, which they now

carry in their breasts frozen and benumbed, shall be heated by the fire of hell, and fly upon them and sting their souls with a burning and flaming anguish; did they believe this, would they not be careful to give no offence to their consciences? Would they not be as careful to avoid all sin, that arms the terrors of hell against them, as they have reason to think a damned wretch in hell, who hath had the experience of these things would be, if God would release him out of it, with a promise that he shall forever escape it, upon the same terms that he hath promised us? Think with yourselves, what effect the sense and feeling of those dreadful things would have upon such an one, to make him rigorously conscientious, that in nothing he provoke so terrible a God, or offend and irritate a revenging conscience, that will be sure to repay him home sevenfold into his own bosom; why the same carefulness and circumspection would it work in all of us, did we as firmly and strongly believe those things to be true, as God hath evidently and clearly revealed them to be true in his word. It is true, these things we all know, and we persuade ourselves that we do believe them: do we not profess to believe that Jesus Christ shall judge both quick and dead? That all shall receive rewards according to their works: those, that have done well, the reward of eternal life; and those, that have done ill, the reward of eternal death? These things we may, indeed, profess to believe; and these things we may frequently represent to our own thoughts: but the weak and small influence, that these things have to over-awe our consciences, evinceth clearly that this is not-faith but fancy: it is a wavering, unevident opinion, that we have taken up, and that we call by the name of faith; for, did we live in the belief of these truths, we should no more dare to sin against our consciences, than if we saw hell flaming before these eyes of ours, and knew that upon the next sin we commit we were to be cast into it. And thus you see a historical faith is a great help to purify the heart, and to keep the conscience clear and inoffensive.

(2) *A justifying faith* also is of great use to purify the conscience. And this it doth not morally, by any natural influence or efficacy of its own; but only mystically, as it applies to the soul the blood of Jesus Christ, that blood that alone takes away the defilement of our sins. A historical faith may keep the soul from contracting defilement; but this justifying, this saving faith washes out the stains and defilements that we have contracted, and makes us white and spotless in the blood of the Lamb. Faith is that conveyance, which God hath appointed to bring the blood of Christ to stream

forth upon the defiled soul and conscience; and, upon every renewed act of sin, we ought, by a renewed act of faith, to lay our spotted and defiled souls under the fall of that fountain, that is set open to wash and cleanse us from our filth and pollution. Thus faith cleanseth the conscience, mystically; and, by the actings of faith, we may thus get and keep our consciences clear and inoffensive.

5. If you would keep your consciences clear, then *set a strict watch and guard upon yourselves; both upon your inward and upon your outward man.*

(1) Keep a narrow guard upon your heart.

The heart is the great meeting place, where objects, thoughts, and affections do swarm and crowd together: and, as much concourse leaves dirt behind it upon the place, so this great heart-assembly usually leaves it foul and polluted. Our Saviour, Mark vii. 20, tells the Jews, that it was that which was within them, that wickedness which lay latent in their hearts, that, which proceedeth from the heart, "that defileth the man:" there is a defilement in the thoughts and in the desires, as well as in the more gross and bulky sins of the life. Hence the Prophet Jeremiah says, Jer. iv. 14: "O Jerusalem, wash thy heart from wickedness!" why, wherewith is it polluted? The next words show it: "How long shall thy vain thoughts lodge within thee?" Vain thoughts leave a stain and contagion upon the soul; and, certainly, if a vain thought, that is such a fleeting and volitrary thing, breathes a kind of contagion and taint upon the heart, they certainly then must have foul hearts indeed and their spots ingrain, who lie soaking and stewing themselves in unclean, malicious, and covetous thoughts and designs. Since, then, conscience is apt to receive taint, but with the breathing of a vain and sinful thought upon it, how doth it concern us to keep a watchful and circumspect eye over every motion of our hearts! It is the Wise Man's counsel, as you have heard; "Keep thy heart with all diligence, for out of it are the issues of life," Prov. iv. 23. Look to it, therefore, that you suffer not your hearts to be defiled with sinful thoughts or sinful affections, by those inward and invisible corruptions that settle at the bottom of it: though the life be never so clear and crystal, yet, if that mud be but stirred and raised, conscience becomes thereby defiled and an evil conscience. And therefore the Apostle, 1 Tim. i. 5, joins them together, speaking of "a pure heart and a good conscience." But, if the steams of lust rise up thick in the heart, they defile and pollute the conscience: hence the Apostle, again, joins them together, Tit. i 15, a defiled mind

and a defiled conscience: the "mind and conscience are defiled." How can the mind be defiled, unless it be with sins of the mind? Evil thoughts and evil affections, as sprightly and aerial as they seem to be, yet leave a stain upon the conscience: as the breathing upon a glass sullies it, and dims the representation of the face that looks into it; so the breathing of evil cogitations upon conscience, the glass of the soul, leaves a mist and cloud upon it, that it can but dimly and darkly represent to us our true state.

(2) Watch diligently, as the heart itself, so all the approaches unto the heart.

The approaches to the heart are like your roads to a great city, which are full of passengers, and usually full of dirt also. And these are the senses, by which and through which objects are continually traveling to the heart, and carry with them a world of wickedness. These are sluices, which, instead of letting in pleasant streams to refresh, commonly let in nothing but mud, which pollutes the soul. There is no actual filthiness in the hearts of any, but what enters in by these inlets. Through these the devil casts in abundance of filth; stirs up and increases indwelling lust; and, by sinful objects that the senses convey to the soul, dungs that ground, which is of itself but too, too fruitful. Thus, the devil makes use of the ear; through it he blows up the bladder of pride, by the breath of popular applause and praise: and thus he makes use of the lascivious eye, as a burning glass to set the heart on fire: and so also he makes use of the other senses, as sinks of luxury and intemperance. Now if you would keep your consciences clear and undefiled, set a strict guard and narrow watch upon all these passages to your hearts: critically examine every thing that goes in, and every thing that comes out by these gates: arrest whatever cannot produce its pass and warrant from the word of God: keep the same watch upon these gates, that God would keep on the gate of the heavenly city, the New Jerusalem. It is said, Rev. xxi. 27, that "there shall in no wise enter into it any thing that defileth." Let us, who would keep our consciences clear, guard all the approaches to them, with the same strictness: and let nothing, that defileth, enter in by these approaches to our hearts.

6. Take this direction: *Be sure to listen to the voice of conscience.*

Those, that stop their ears and will not hear conscience when it directs and reproves, shall be sure to hear it loud enough when it shall accuse and condemn them. Conscience is the voice of God in the soul: now if this voice be slighted, beware lest the next

time it speak to you in thunder. Do nothing contrary to the dictates of your consciences ; for this will provoke God to give you up to a reprobate sense, and judiciously to harden you in your sins : for, if sinning against your consciences doth not corrupt them by making them insensible and stupid, it will certainly corrupt them by making them enraging and despairing.

Now, for your encouragement, let me tell you, while you are careful, by following these directions, to keep your consciences clear, you shall also keep them peaceable. It is the foulness of a gun, that makes it recoil in discharging : and, so, it is the foulness of men's consciences, that makes them recoil upon them in discharging their offices. But, while conscience is kept clear and void of offence, it will be also kept free from quarreling with you, and from accusing and condemning you.

A DISCOURSE

ON THE

GREAT DUTY OF MORTIFICATION.

If ye live after the flesh, ye shall die: but if ye, through the Spirit, do mortify the deeds of the body, ye shall live. ROMANS viii. 13.

INTRODUCTION.

IN these words, without any preface or account of their coherence, are,

FIRST. A promise: the greatest promise, that God can make, or the Scripture propound, or we embrace: "Ye shall live:" that is, ye shall live a life of grace and comfort here; and a life of immortality and eternal glory hereafter.

SECONDLY. We have the condition, upon which this life, both of grace and glory, is propounded: "If ye mortify the deeds of the body:" *εὐδαμονεσθε*: the word signifies to kill or put to death: "If ye kill the deeds of the body, ye shall live." The life of sin and the life of grace and glory are utterly inconsistent and repugnant: you must live, upon the death of sin. Here, we have,

First. The object of this mortification: what it is, that they must put to death: and that is, "the deeds of the body."

By the *body* we must here understand the same of which the Apostle speaks in the beginning of the verse: *If ye live after the flesh.* *Flesh* and *body* are but equivalent terms; both of them signifying one and the same corruption of nature. Indeed, the proper seat of sin is the soul; and they are the deeds of the soul, that we must chiefly mortify: the deeds of the body are sinful but at the second hand, as they are swayed and exerted by a sinful soul; yet the Scripture doth frequently call this corruption *flesh*, *the body*, *the members*; opposing it to *the Spirit*, to *the mind*; Rom vii. 23. "I see another law in my members, warring against the law of my mind." And this it doth,

First. To denote the degrading malignity, that there is in sin.

It doth unspirit and unsoul a man. A sinner is called a carnal man; a man, made up of nothing but a lump of dull flesh, kneaded together without spirit, without life. And therefore the Apostle doth not bid them mortify the deeds of their souls, because wicked

men act as though they had no souls, or at least not so noble a soul.

Secondly. It calls sin "the deeds of the body," to denote what it is to which sin tends.

It is only to please, to pamper the body; the sensual, sordid, and baser part of man. The soul of a wicked man acts for no higher an end, than the soul of a beast doth. The soul of a beast acts not for itself, but is made a drudge and underling to the body; it serves only to carry the body to and fro to its pasture, and to make it relish its food and fodder. Thus, truly, it is with the souls of wicked men: they act not for themselves, but are only their bodies' caterers; that seek out and lay in "provision for the flesh, to fulfil the lusts thereof:" Rom. xiii. 14.

Thirdly. Sins are called "the deeds of the body," because, though the soul be the chief seat of their abode, yet the body is the great instrument of their acting.

Rom. vi. 19: "As ye have yielded your members servants.....to iniquity; even so now yield your members servants to righteousness." Indeed, there are some refined sins, that hold little communion with the body, and partake but little of that gross carnality and corpulency, if I may so term it, that makes other sins swell to such a bulk; and yet these must be also mortified: and these are also "the deeds of the body;" because the soul, acting even these spiritual sins, acts as much below itself, as the body's actings are below the soul's.

As for "the deeds of the body," by *deeds* we must understand, not only the inward ebullitions and the outward eruptions of this body of sin, but also the spring and fountain itself whence these flow. The corruption of nature itself must be mortified: the body of death must be put to death. All these are called the deeds of *the flesh*: not only those, that the Apostle reckons up and tells us are manifest, Gal. v. 19, but also the inward motions, yea, the depraved root and habit itself; which are secret, because, though these be not outward acts, yet they would be so, and sin is not perfected nor finished till it be so.

Secondly. As the deeds of the flesh are the object of mortification; so here, we have the persons, on whom this duty of mortification is pressed: "If ye, through the Spirit, do mortify:" that is, ye, who have received the Spirit; ye, who are believers: for such are those, whom he describes in the foregoing part of the chapter, vv. 1, 5, 10, 11.

Both these branches are comprehended in the condition required to life; "If ye.....mortify the deeds of the body, ye shall live."

THIRDLY. Here is, likewise, the way and means, whereby believers are enabled to mortify "the deeds of the body:" and that is, "through the Spirit: If ye, through the Spirit, do mortify." Whatsoever other helps, either of outward or inward rigor and severity, men use against their lusts, they may indeed thereby for a time stifle and suppress them: but if the Spirit of God do not set in with the work, it can never amount to a true mortification.

From the words thus opened, many propositions may be drawn out: as,

First. From the promise of life, if we take life for the life of comfort and the life of grace, made upon the condition of mortification, observe,

That IT IS IMPOSSIBLE FOR THAT SOUL TO HAVE LIVELY COMFORTS AND LIVELY GRACES, WHOSE LUSTS ARE LIVELY AND UNMORTIFIED.

There is a necessity for it, that the deeds of the body be put to death, if you intend that either your grace or your comfort should survive. I do not absolutely say that grace cannot live in the children of God, under every present neglect of mortification: but yet, certainly, this will destroy their comforts; yea, and eat out the vigor, activity, and liveliness of their graces, that, though they do live, yet they will live but a lingering and decaying life: they will but live such a life, as sin doth in those, who exercise a constant mortification, that is, they will but live, as it were, a dying life.

Secondly. If we take the life promised for eternal life, then observe,

That THE FUTURE LIFE OF GLORY IS INFALLIBLY ASSURED TO THE PRESENT DEATH OF SIN.

If ye mortify, ye shall live. Not that life proceeds from mortification, as the effect from the cause; but only it follows upon it, as the end upon the use of the means.

Thirdly. From the persons, on whom this duty of mortification is pressed, observe,

That BELIEVERS THEMSELVES, WHO ARE FREED FROM THE REIGNING POWER OF SIN, HAVE YET CONTINUAL NEED TO MORTIFY THE INHERENT REMAINS OF IT.

Fourthly. From the aid and assistance, that believers must call in to this work, observe,

That **WHATEVER ADVANTAGES MEN HAVE GAINED AGAINST THEIR LUSTS, EITHER IN SUPPRESSING THEIR MOTIONS, OR IN RESTRAINING THEIR ERUPTIONS; YET, IF THIS BE NOT FROM THE WORKING OF THE SPIRIT OF GOD IN THEM, IT IS NOT TRUE NOR RIGHT MORTIFICATION:** "If ye, through the Spirit, do mortify."

I shall not handle all these propositions, but only the third, That the children of God have continual need to exercise mortification: and the other points will be subservient to the prosecution of this.

This the Apostle urges, Col. iii. 5, where he speaks to those that were "risen with Christ;" as you may see, v. 1: to those who were "dead" with Christ, and whose "life was hid with Christ in God;" v. 3: to those who shall certainly "appear with Christ in glory;" v. 4: and, yet, such as these he commands to "mortify their members which are upon the earth."

And it may appear strange, if you consider what members they are, which must be mortified. Not vain thoughts; deadness of heart; uneven walkings; and those inward sins, which if men did thoroughly mortify, they would be made perfect, and become even as the angels of God: but they are the great and the visible limbs of the old man: they are "fornication, uncleanness, inordinate affections, evil concupiscence, and covetousness:" and, in v. 8, he bids them again, "put off all these, anger, wrath, malice, blasphemy, filthy communication," and lying. Strange it is, that believers of so eminent a rank should need calling upon to mortify such gross and foul sins as these; and yet it is no more than necessary: the best Christians on earth have a stock of corruption in them, which doth habitually dispose them unto these sins, as great and heinous as they are; and the devil will so suit his temptations, as will certainly draw forth his corruption into act, unless they keep a strict hand and a strict watch over themselves in the constant exercise of mortification. And, therefore, as we urge it upon wicked men, that they slight not sin because it is small, and say, "Is it not a little one, and my soul shall live?" so we must press it upon the best and greatest of saints, that they would not slight any sin because it is great and heinous; and say with themselves, "Is it not a great one, and my soul shall never commit it?" As we presume upon the pardoning mercy of God in the com-

mission of small sins, so we are apt to presume upon our own strength to preserve us from the commission of great and crying sins; and so, by their security and carelessness, the best do sometimes find themselves surprised by them. If we should be earnest in exhorting you to beware that you murder not, that you blaspheme not, that you turn not apostates from the profession of your religion: would you not reply with Hazael, are we dogs that we should do this great wickedness? Yes, certainly, this great wickedness you would do, yea there is no abomination so abominable which you would not do, if you do not bring the cross of Christ into your hearts by a daily mortification.

I. But, before I can proceed farther, I must lay down this for a **GENERAL PRINCIPLE**, that all mortification is the weakening of sin, in respect of some strength and power, that it formerly had over the soul.

There is, especially, a threefold power observable in sin.

Its damning and condemnatory power, whereby it makes the soul liable to wrath.

Its ruling and reigning power, whereby it keeps the soul under a wretched slavery and vassalage.

Its indwelling and captivating power, whereby, through its continual assaults, it oftentimes breaks in upon a Christian, beats him from his defense, batters his spiritual armor, routs his graces, wastes his conscience, and at last leads him into a woeful, and it may be a long captivity.

According to this threefold power, so we must likewise distinguish of a threefold mortification of sin.

i. There is a mortification of sin, as to its **CONDEMNING** power.

"There is, therefore, now no condemnation to them which are in Christ Jesus:" Rom. viii. 1. Sin, though it may still hale us before God, and make our consciences confess guilty; yet cannot now cast and sentence us, if we believe: it is still strong enough to drag us before God, to accuse us to God, to affright and terrify conscience; but it is not strong enough to drag us into hell, to adjudge us to everlasting wrath: it hath lost its power in that respect, and is become weak and mortified. Whence is it, that sin hath its condemning power, but from the law? "The strength of sin is the law;" 1 Cor. xv. 56: had not the law threatened con-

demnation to the transgressor, sin could have had no strength at all to condemn him. But is this sentence of the law still in force against believers? No, says the Apostle, "we are delivered from the law, that being dead wherein we were held;" Rom. vii. 6: and, if the law's power to condemn believers be dead, sin's power to condemn them, which was but only borrowed from the law, must certainly be dead also. But how came the law thus mortified? The Apostle tells us in Col. ii. 14, that Christ "took it out of the way, nailing it to his cross:" and no wonder, then, if it be dead; that is, the cross and the sufferings of Jesus Christ have so fully satisfied for those who believe, that the law is as it were now dead, and hath no strength nor power left to condemn them. But this is not that mortification of which I intend to speak, and to which my text exhorts us: therefore,

ii. There is a mortification of sin, in respect of its REIGNING power.

What saith the Apostle, Rom. vi. 11, 12? In v. 11, saith he, "reckon yourselves to be dead indeed unto sin:" what then? Why, upon this he founds an exhortation in v. 12: "Let not sin reign therefore in your mortal bodies." Now this reign of sin consists not in the multitude, greatness, or prevalence of sins: for all these are consistent with a state of grace, and may be in a child of God, in whom sin doth not nor cannot reign: but in the inbeing of sin without grace, whether it acts more or less violently, yea whether it acts at all or no; yet, if the habit of sin possess the soul without any principle of grace implanted which is contrary to it, that man may be said to be still under the dominion of sin. This mortification, then, of sin as to its reigning power, is completed in the first act of conversion and regeneration; for, in that very instant that any is born again, he hath a principle of spiritual life put into him: the habit of supernatural grace, which lusteth against the flesh, weakens the whole body of sin, and crosses and contradicts every corrupt motion; so that, though he cannot do what he would, yet he would not do what he doth: and this breaks the tyranny of sin, and mortifies it as to its reigning power.

iii. There is a mortification of sin, in regard to its CAPTIVATING and INDWELLING power. And this is that, at which the text chiefly aims.

Corruption, wheresoever it is, doth not usually lie dormant; but, where it cannot reign, there it will molest: stir, and struggle, and

fight it will; and, it may be, prevail to a victory, even over those, over whom it shall never prevail unto condemnation. This calls for a constant work of mortification: every day and hour there are corrupt propensities to be reined in, sinful thoughts to be struggled against, sinful motions to be suppressed; and it is not the mere habit and principle of grace, without a vigorous and continued exercise of it in a way of mortification: that, indeed, gave sin its death's wound in our regeneration; but still we must follow it, doubling stroke upon stroke, while it hath any life and motion in it. We do not content ourselves that we crush the head of a serpent: no; but, while it stirs and writhes itself, we still lay on. So should we do with lust: it is not enough that the head of it is crushed, that its first wound in our conversion is incurable; but still, so long as it stirs and moves within us, we must be continually striking at it by continued acts of mortification: nor must all suffice, till death comes in to our part, and by one blow destroys it.

In these three senses, sin may be said to be mortified. In its condemning power: and, so, it was at once mortified for all the elect, by Christ hanging on the cross: and this mortification is particularly applied to them, when they believe. In its reigning power: and, so, it is mortified in the first moment of regeneration, by the implantation of an active principle of grace and holiness, which dissolves its government, and frees the soul from its dominion. And, lastly, in its captivating power, as it rebels and makes an insurrection against the sovereignty of grace: and so, it is mortified by weakening its forces, hindering its inroads, resisting its assaults, beating down its first risings and emotions; and all this, by constant, careful, and sincere endeavors, even all our days.

II. I might now easily demonstrate, in several particulars, HOW ABSOLUTELY NECESSARY IT IS, EVEN FOR THE BEST AND HIGHEST CHRISTIANS, TO KEEP UP THE CONSTANT EXERCISE OF MORTIFICATION.

Take only some few.

i. IN AN UNMORTIFIED COURSE, YOU FRUSTRATE THE VERY END OF YOUR GRACES.

Hath God implanted in you a noble, active, and divine principle, that will certainly in the end prove victorious if it be employed? And will you, while lusts and temptations are overrunning your

souls, and making a prey of you, will you, I say, check it, and keep it under a restraint? Grace hath in it a natural antipathy and repugnance against sin; and would, where it hath its free scope, naturally and necessarily destroy it. Gal. v. 17, the Apostle tells us, "the flesh lusteth against the Spirit." And, what! doth the Spirit sit down tame and quiet under such an affront and opposition? No, saith he "the Spirit" also lusteth "against the flesh:" it doth no sooner see a corruption begin to heave and stir in the heart but it would be presently upon it: it would beat it down and keep it under, did not your deceitful hearts betray it, or did they but concur with it. Now consider,

1. *Is not this a foul piece of ingratitude and disingenuousness against God, the God of all grace?*

He, seeing thy weakness and impotence to deal with those mighty corruptions, that storm, rage, and domineer within thee, hath sent the auxiliaries and succors of his divine grace to aid thee: and thou either turnest treacherous, and deliverest them up bound to be abused, yea if possible to be slaughtered by thy lusts; or, else, in a cowardly manner desertest them in the combat. How canst thou answer it to God, that thou goest the way not only to betray thine own soul to ruin, but his grace; that grace, which doth so naturally oppose, and would in the end infallibly subdue all the corruptions with which thou strugglest?

2. *Is it not desperate madness and folly, to neglect or hinder that, which would side with thee, and fight for thee?*

Alas! the quarrel is not grace's, but thine: and it is no less than thine eternal salvation or thine eternal damnation, about which this war is commenced. When corruption comes up against thee in a full body, and the devil in the head of it leading it on, dost thou think thou canst of thyself stand against these many legions? And, yet, shall grace stand by and proffer thee a sure aid, and thou refuse or neglect it? What else is this, but to make void the use and office of grace, and to be injurious to the goodness of God; who hath therefore given thee grace to this very end, that thou shouldst employ it against thy lusts?

ii. Unmortified sin doth not only frustrate the end and use of grace; but, what is worse, it doth also MISERABLY WEAKEN AND WASTE GRACE.

It is impossible, that both grace and corruption should, at once, be strong and vigorous, in the same soul. If the one thrive, the other must needs languish; if corruption prosper and be well-

liking, grace must needs pine away into a consumption. They are like plants growing together in the same soil, that have a mutual antipathy: they cannot both flourish at the same time. If a garden be overrun with weeds, they choke up and starve the profitable herbs, that they cannot live there; and why is it, but because they draw away the sap and moisture that should feed them? So is it with grace and sin in the soul: if thy soul be overspread with unmortified sins, like so many rank and hurtful weeds sprouting up in it, grace must needs decay and wither, for it cannot have its sap to nourish it.

There are two things, that do as it were nourish grace unto a mighty increase, both of strength and beauty: and they are holy thoughts, and holy duties. A man ordinarily needs nothing more to strengthen him but food and exercise: holy thoughts are, as it were, the food of grace; that provision, which we are always to lay in to sustain it in life: and holy duties are, as it were, its exercise; whereby grace is breathed and preserved in health. But an unmortified lust hinders grace from gathering strength from thoughts or duties. For,

1. An unmortified lust *doth usually sequester a man's thoughts to itself.*

How doth such a lust summon all the thoughts to attend upon it! some it sends out upon one errand, and some upon another, and all must be busied about its object. Where covetousness, or pride, or wantonness is the unmortified sin, how is the imagination crowded full of thoughts that are making provision for these lusts! Some fetch in their objects, and some beautify and adorn them, and some buzz and whisper the commendations of those objects to the soul: nay, and lest any thought should be vacant, some it will employ in fancying fictions and chimeras, things that never were nor are like to be, if they have but any tendency to feed and nourish that corruption. I appeal to your own experience, for the confirmation of this. And, this, indeed, is a good mark, whereby we may find out what is our unmortified sin: see what it is, that most of all defiles your fancy, that the stream and current of your thoughts most run out after. Do your thoughts, when they fly abroad, return home loaded with the world? Do they ordinarily present to you fantastic riches, possessions, gains, purchases; and still fill you with contrivances how to make them real? Then covetousness is your unmortified lust. Do they dwell and pore upon your own perfections? Can you erect an idol to yourselves in your own imaginations, and then fall down and wor-

ship it? Or do your thoughts, like flies, pitch only upon the sores and imperfections of others? Then your unmortified sin is pride. And the like trial may be made of the rest. Now, I say, when an unmortified lust hath thus seized all the thoughts, and pressed them to the service of a corrupted imagination, grace then wants its food: it is ready to be starved; and no wonder, if it languish and decay.

2. An unmortified lust *doth much hinder and interrupt the life, vigor, and spirituality of holy duties.*

And this it doth two ways: either by deadening the heart, through the guilt of it; or, by distracting the heart, through the power of it.

(1) An unmortified lust *deadens the heart* in holy duties, through the sense of the guilt of it lying upon the conscience.

Alas! how can we go to God with any freedom of spirit, how can we call him Father with any boldness, while we are conscious of an unmortified lust that lies still at the bottom? Speak: do not your consciences fly in your faces, and even stop your mouths, when you are praying, with some such suggestions as these? "What! can I pray for pardon of sin, for strength against sin, who yet do harbor and foster a known lust unmortified? Do I beg grace against sin, and yet maintain a known sin? What! dare I beg grace, to have it abused, to have it baffled, to have it destroyed by this sin of mine, that is yet unsubdued? Is not such a prayer mere hypocrisy and dissimulation? Will the Lord hear it? or, if he doth hear it, will he not count it an abomination to him?" You, now, whose consciences thus accuse you, do you not find such reflections to be a great deadening unto duty? Such, as clip the wings of the spirit, and take off the wheels of the soul, that it can drive on but heavily and slowly? Certainly, guilt is the greatest impediment to duty in the whole world: it takes off from the freeness and filialness of our spirits; and fills us with distrust, diffidence, and a slavish fear of coming before God, rather as our Judge than as our Father.

(2) An unmortified lust *hinders holy duty, by distracting the heart* through the power of it.

It draws away the heart from God: it entangles the affections: it scatters the thoughts: it discomposes the whole frame of the soul: so that, at the best, it proves but a broken and a shattered duty. And herein lies the cunning of Satan, that, if there be any corruption in the soul more unmortified than another, that corruption he will be sure to stir up, and interpose betwixt God and the

soul in the performance of duty. Now when lust thus hinders duty, grace hath not its breathing nor exercise; and no wonder, if it grow faint and decay.

iii. SOME FOUL AND SCANDALOUS ACTUAL SIN LIES AT THE DOOR OF A NEGLECTED MORTIFICATION.

Do we see a professor at any time break out into the commission of some notorious wickedness, what can it be imputed unto, but that corruption took advantage of his neglect of mortification? When inward motions are suffered perpetually to solicit, tempt, and importune the soul, it is a sign that lust hath already gained the affections; and, could conscience be laid asleep, nothing would hinder it from breaking out into act. And, alas! when all the work of restraint lies merely upon conscience, it is a great hazard to that soul, lest the violence of temptations, and the importunity of occasions, or some other advantage that lust gains, should force its guards, and break out to the eminent provocation of God and scandal of religion. And, therefore, beware you do not license corruption to stir and act within: you cannot set it bounds, nor say to it, "Thus far thou shalt go, and no farther: thou shalt go as far as thoughts, as far as fancy; but, conscience, look thou to it, that it proceed no farther." If you would, therefore, secure yourselves from this danger, mortify lust in the very womb: there stifle and suppress the motions and risings of it, otherwise ye know not to what a prodigious height of impiety it will grow. The least and most inconsiderable sinful thought tends to an infinite guilt: an unworthy and unbecoming thought concerning God tends to horrid blasphemy; every lascivious thought, to open uncleanness: every envious thought, to blood murder: and, unless mortification be daily exercised to suppress and beat down these motions, you know not into how many soul-destroying sins they may hurry you.

iv. One unmortified lust DOTH MIGHTILY ALIENATE THE HEART FROM ITS ACQUAINTANCE AND COMMUNION WITH GOD.

God and the soul grow estranged, as soon as any unmortified sin and the soul grow familiar. What God saith, Ezek. xiv. 5, concerning the idols of the house of Israel, the same I may say concerning men's lusts, which, while unmortified, are as so many idols set up in the heart: "They are all estranged from me through their idols." And yet these very men, of whom God thus complains as being grown strangers to him, we find in the first verse crowding about the prophet to inquire of God by him; they come

to him, and yet are estranged from him. Such is the wonderful malignity of unmortified lust, that it makes men strangers to God, even when they are nearest attendants upon him.

There are but two things, that keep up acquaintance between God and the soul.

On God's part, the gracious communications of his Spirit; through which, by enlightening, enlivening, supporting, and comforting influences, he converseth with that soul to whom he vouchsafes them. And,

On our part, the spiritual frame of the heart; whereby it doth with a holy delight, freedom, and frequency, converse with God in the returns of sincere and cordial obedience.

But an unmortified lust breaks off this acquaintance, as to both the parts of it.

1. *It provokes God to suspend the influences of his Spirit, and so to cut off the intercourse on his part.*

Isa. lvii. 17: "For the iniquity of his covetousness was I wroth, and smote him; I hid me, and was wroth:" so, truly, in the day of our desertion, whether it be in respect of grace or comfort, it is for the iniquity of such or such an unmortified sin that God is wroth and hides himself. Think you that God will so debase himself, as to be in the same heart an inmate with lust; when that shall be regarded and he slighted, that attended and he neglected? Will not this provoke him to call in the influences of his grace, and depart? Wherefore else is it, that Christians do so often complain, that God is unto them but "as a stranger, and as a wayfaring man, that turneth aside to tarry but for a night," (Jer. xiv. 8,) nay, for a moment? That God is not unto them, as in the days of old? That those quickenings, revivings, supports, and comforts are now lost, which before they enjoyed? And that they become as the heath and wilderness: barren as to grace, and parched as to comfort? If they look inward in this case, will they not find some iniquity regarded, some sin allowed and indulged, to be the cause of all this? Certainly, if mortification doth neither strike at this root of bitterness, nor lop off its branches, it will spread itself over the whole soul; and intercept both the light of God's countenance, and the influences of his Spirit.

2. *One unmortified lust doth mightily untune the soul, and disorder the spirituality of that frame and disposition in which it should be kept, if we would maintain communion with God.*

Look how estrangement and distance grow between familiar friends; so, likewise, grows the estrangement between God and

the soul. If a man be conscious of any injury that he hath done his friend, this will make him afraid and ashamed to converse with him, less free and less frequent in his society. So it is here, in this case: an unmortified lust fills the soul with a guilty shame, arising from the consciousness of an injury done to God: this guilty shame is always joined with some degrees of a slavish and base fear of God, who is thus wronged: both these take off from that holy freedom, which, reverently to use towards God, is the great privilege of a gracious heart in its communion with him: and this lessens that sweet and unspeakable delight, which formerly it could enjoy from the intimacy, freedom, and spirituality of this fellowship: and all these do finally cause a shyness, distance, and estrangement in the soul towards God. The root of all this is still in some unmortified lust, which is the occasion of the whole breach.

Now reflect upon yourselves, you, who have indulged any sin: hath it not by degrees eaten out the spirituality of your hearts, and weakened the life and vigor of your communion? Hath it not made you dead, and cold, and indifferent unto the things and ways of God? Have you not beheld God as it were at a great distance, and cared not for a nearer converse with him? Is it not high time, think you, that this lust, which hath thus divided between God and your souls, should now at length be mortified; and, this make-bait being once removed, that you again should renew the nearness of your acquaintance with him? Otherwise, let me tell you, it is sadly to be feared, lest this estrangement grow into a woeful apostasy, and that end in a fearful perdition.

v. One unmortified lust GIVES AN ADDITIONAL STRENGTH TO OTHERS ALSO, which of themselves were weak and impotent, and could not otherwise have such power over the soul.

And this it doth, as it is the ringleading lust, that unites all others under a discipline and government: scattered enemies are not so powerful nor so formidable, as when they are combined together in a body: then their design is one, their enterprise one, and they all act as one enemy. Now an unmortified lust doth, as it were, rally all the rest under a discipline: this heads them: this leads them on: and they all promote the designs, and fight under the conduct of this lust; which union adds a mighty strength and power to them. It may be, a temptation, which could not prevail for itself and upon the account of its own interest that it hath in the soul, will yet certainly prevail, when it pleads its subordi-

nation and serviceableness to the unmortified sin, the master-lust. This is very remarkable: and therefore suppose, for instance, that pride be the unmortified sin, the great ringleading lust, and a temptation to covetousness assaults the soul: possibly this being but an underling sin, and not having made so great a party for itself as the other, might be easily rejected, did it plead only for itself; but, when it pretends the interest of the master-lust, and pleads how serviceable great and rich possessions would be to the advancement of pride and ambition, this adds a double enforcement to the temptation, and thereby bears down the soul before it, as unable to make any available resistance. And thus, proportionably, it is in all other sins whatsoever: they have a dependence one upon another: the great sin sways principally; and cannot subsist, unless provision be laid in, and a way made for it by inferior sins, which it countenances and bears out by its own authority, and derives to them the same prevalence that itself hath gained over the soul. Let not men, therefore, think that their captivity to sin is more tolerable, because they find but one the most prevailing: alas! this doth but serve to unite and drive the rest to a head, which perhaps otherwise would be vagrant and wandering, and uncertain in their tempting; and, by this one unmortified lust, the devil hath gotten a fit handle to the soul, whereby he may turn and wind it to whatever other sin he pleaseth. It was therefore a wise command of the King of Syria to his captain, 1 Kings xxii. 31, to "fight neither with small nor great, save only with the King of Israel:" he well knew, that if the chief commander were once slain, the ungoverned army might easily be routed and put to flight. We must, in the mortifying of the deeds of the body, take the same counsel, and follow the same course; fight, if not only, yet chiefly, against the commanding lust: if that be once mortified, the rest are as an army without a head, who quickly will find themselves without hands too: otherwise, while any one lust remains unmortified, the soul is almost in as dangerous a condition, as if every lust were violent and raging.

vi. An unmortified sin WILL MOST CERTAINLY BEREAVE THE SOUL OF PEACE AND COMFORT: and hinder it from ever enjoying that heaven upon earth, of assurance.

If you send to inquire of your souls, as Joram did of Jehu, soul, "Is it peace?" Is not this sad answer returned, "What hast thou to do with peace?" Or, What peace, so long as thy pride,

thy covetousness, thy intemperance, while such and such a lust remains unmortified?

An unmortified lust hinders peace and comfort these two ways.

1. *As it blots out our evidences for heaven.*

Let any man in the world tell me that his title to heaven is clear and past all uncomfortable doubtings, whose conscience doth not witness his sincerity to him, that he doth maintain an universal opposition against all sin, and exercise a constant mortification of it; and I shall presently conclude that man's assurance to be the false and glowing presumptions of a spirit of error and delusion. We know no better test of a man's condition than what my text affords: "If ye mortify, ye shall live." Now when any lust is allowed and indulged, will not this blast a man's comfort, and raise in him fears and jealousies concerning his eternal welfare? "Such a corruption I do not strive nor struggle against, I do not labor to beat down and keep under; and how then shall I assure myself that I am free from the reigning power of it, or shall be free from its condemning power?" Let me tell you, though freedom from the dominion of sin may possibly consist with a much-neglected mortification; yet a comfortable evidence of that freedom cannot: and therefore, no wonder if, through the carelessness of Christians in this great work, so few attain solid and constant comfort; the most being sadly perplexed with doubts and jealousies of their hypocrisy and unsoundness, even all their days. This all riseth from some unmortified lust or other, which either leaves a deep blur upon their evidences for heaven, or else raises a thick mist before their eyes that they cannot read them.

2. *An unmortified lust hinders peace by fomenting a perpetual civil war in the soul.*

Sometimes so it fares, where there is no higher principle than merely natural conscience: this strives and combats, as it is able, against the sin, before it is committed: this cries out and rages against the sinner, after it is committed. But it is always so, where there is a principle of true grace implanted, to excite and assist conscience. Let corruption be never so great, its faction never so potent: yet grace, though but mean and weak, will still fight it: it will neither give nor take truce, till, at length, the great unmortified lust be subdued, and fall conquered and slain under it. What tumults, what uproars, what bandying of affections against affections, will against will, thoughts against thoughts, do woefully disquiet that soul, where corruption will not submit, and grace cannot! There is no deliberate act, either of grace or corruption,

exerted, but what must first break through a whole army of its enemies, set to oppose it. Gal. v. 17: "The flesh lusteth against the Spirit, and the Spirit against the flesh.....so that ye cannot do the things that ye would:" that is, neither can ye act according to the bent of your corrupt will, nor yet of your sanctified will, without opposition and resistance from one of these two quarrelling principles within, *the flesh* and *the Spirit*. Such men are like those builders in Nehemiah, that wrought with one hand, and with the other held their weapons: so, truly, if a child of God, in whom corruption is yet too prevalent, work the works of God with one hand, he must hold the weapons of his spiritual warfare in the other. This is that unpeaceable and turbulent condition, into which an unmortified lust will certainly bring you. And though, indeed, in the most mortified Christian on earth, there will sometimes be combatings between these two contrary parties; yet it is not with so much distraction, anguish, and terrors, as where corruption is more violent and outrageous.

I might add that an utter neglect of mortification binds you over to eternal condemnation: "If ye live after the flesh, ye shall die." Your election itself cannot save you; your vocation, regeneration, and whatever else you might build the certainty of your salvation upon, are all in vain if you do not mortify. There is no other way, by which you can possibly get to heaven, but by marching over the necks of all your lusts. But I shall insist no longer on this head.

And now, if to profess God with our mouths, and to deny him with our hearts and lives, if to talk of religion and to live without it, if to have a form of godliness and to deny the power of it, be indeed this necessary mortification, I need press this duty no farther: we have such mortified ones, more than enough. But, if wantonness, censoriousness, contempt of the means of grace, giddiness of opinions, libertinism, and strange large allowances that men take to themselves in their conversation, be signs of an unmortified heart; never certainly was there any professing age in the world, that had more need to have this doctrine often pressed upon them, than that in which we live. I am not now urging you to that churlish and rigorous way of mortification, consisting only in a froward abstinence from the comforts and conveniences of this life, with which some perhaps blind devotionists have too rigidly exercised themselves. I know the maceration of the outward man

is not the mortification of "the old man;" and yet were there among professors a greater moderation even in the use of the lawful comforts of this life, there would not possibly be so great an advantage given to deceivers as now there is, who, under the specious show of self denial in these things, draw away numbers of proselytes after them, as being the only mortified men. It is the inward mortification, that we labor to press upon you, which were it once industriously exercised, outward exorbitancies would of themselves fall into a decency and sobriety.

But, alas! when men shall talk at such a rate of spirituality, as if some angels sat upon their tongues; and yet live at such an excess of vanity, it may be of profaneness, as if legions possessed their hearts; what shall we judge of such men? If we judge the tree by the leaves, what other can we think of them, but that they are trees of righteousness, and plants of renown? But if we look to their fruits, unprofitableness in their relations, envy, strife, variance, emulation, wrath, excessive pride, worldliness, selfishness, what can we think of them, but that heaven and hell are now as near together, as these men's hearts and mouths? And, truly, to let go these gross professors, have we not cause to take up sad complaints even of true Christians themselves, in whom the reigning power of sin is in their regeneration mortified? May we not take up the same speech concerning them, as St. Paul doth concerning the Corinthians, 1 Cor. iii. 3: "Ye are yet carnal and walk as men?" If the Apostle could have laid in charge against these Corinthians, not only envy, strife, and divisions; but hatred, bitterness, implacableness of spirit, brain-sick opinions, and self-seeking practices, joined with a great measure of neglect and contempt of the glory of God; as justly as we can against the Christians of our times; certainly his reproof would not have been so mild, as to tell them that they walked "as men;" but, rather, that they walked as devils. Would to God their miscarriages were not so generally known, as that every one could not supply the sense!

III. I have already set before you the great evils, that follow upon a neglected mortification. As to your own particulars, if that cannot affect you, there is but little ground to hope that your charity to others should prevail: yet give me leave to mention **TWO GRAND EVILS, THAT HEREBY BEFAL OTHERS.**

i. Hereby **THEY ARE INDUCED TO THINK ALL PROFESSORS ARE BUT HYPOCRITES, AND RELIGION A MERE MOCKERY;** and so come

to have their hearts embittered against the ways of God, as being all but mere deceit and imposition.

It is a sad accusation, Rom. ii. 24: "The name of God is blasphemed among the Gentiles through you." How so? Because, as in the former verses, they rested in the law, and had a form of godliness, and were confident that they were guides to the blind, and lights to them which were in darkness: eminent professors they were, like the men of our days: but mark, "Thou, which teachest another, teachest thou not thyself?.....Thou, that makest thy boast of the law, through breaking the law dishonorest thou God?" vv. 21-23. Thou, who professest mortification, dost thou indulge thyself in thy lusts? Thou, who pretendest to near fellowship and communion with God, dost thou live as one without God in the world? Tremble at it: the name of the great God is blasphemed among wicked wretches through you: those, who were profane, you make atheistical; scoffing and deriding godliness, as an idle whim: and, because they see so little in their lives, they presently conclude there is no other difference between saints and sinners at all, but that the one have their tongues a little better tipped and their fancies a little higher excited, than the other. What is the common raillery of these profane persons? "Oh! this, forsooth, is a saint, and yet how covetous, how griping and greedy! Well, of all men deliver me from falling into the hands of a saint." Beware, lest these their blasphemies be not at last charged upon you; who, through a loose, wanton, and unmortified conversation, have made religion evn to stink in their nostrils. It is mortification alone, that can convince the world, that religion is any thing real: but while men profess largely and live at large too, this keeps men off from religion; not because they think it a thing above them, but because they scorn it as a baseness below them, so to juggle and dissemble with the world.

ii. Hereby, also, WICKED MEN FLATTER THEMSELVES IN THEIR SINFUL ESTATE, supporting themselves upon the lives of unmortified professors, that certainly they are in as good a condition as they.

"They are proud, and impatient, and earthly: and, if these men get to heaven, why may not I? It is true they talk of self-denial and mortification; but look into our lives, and mine is as harmless and innocent as theirs: they discourse of experiences, and communion and acquaintance with God, and a host of words that I understand not; but, certainly, if God will not condemn them,

although they do nothing but talk, he will not condemn me, for not talking as they do." And thus the hands of wicked men are mightily strengthened, and hereby they fortify themselves in their unregeneracy.

Now, Christians, if you would adorn the Gospel, and bring a credit upon religion, live so that your conversations may be a conviction to all the world, that God is in you of a truth: which will be, when mortification is more endeavored and practiced. You have a principle within you which, would you exert to the utmost, mere moralists, with all their civility, and legalists, with all the forced harshness which they use to curb and restrain sin in themselves, must confess that they fall short of true mortification.

IV. Now, though there be, in the whole course of Christianity, no other duty that can plead more for itself than this of mortification; yet there is none, that hath more cause to complain of a general neglect from the most of professors, than this hath. A slight superficial Christianity is that, which now serves the turn; and, if men can but keep themselves from the gross and scandalous pollutions of the world, and together with that maintain a shining blaze of profession, whatever other mortification is pressed upon them, they reject as a needless rigor and severity. To INQUIRE INTO THE CAUSES WHY IT SHOULD BE SO would be to uncase a considerable part of the deceitfulness of sin, and the stratagems of Satan. I shall, therefore, content myself with the discovery of some few grounds, that are more obvious and apparent.

i. The HARSHNESS AND DIFFICULTY OF A THOROUGH MORTIFICATION deter many from going to the bottom of it.

If lust will take a pet, and die of spite and sullenness, for a few sharp words spoken against it, or a few hard thoughts conceived of it; then, indeed, the professors of our age are generally very mortified Christians. But, when we tell them that corruption is both tenacious and powerful, and must be dealt roughly with as a stubborn enemy; that it will cost much sweat and blood, many sad thoughts, many bitter conflicts and agonies of soul to subdue it; this frights them from so hot a service: it is a hard saying, and they cannot bear it. What saith the Apostle, 1 Cor. ix. 26, 27? "So fight I, not as one that beateth the air: But I beat down my

body," for so the word signifies, "and bring it into subjection." But is there any such hardship in this? Would any man be frightened with the difficulty of such a combat, wherein he may beat down his enemy, and yet suffer nothing from him? Were it no more but to beat it down, trample upon it, and triumph over it, who would ever shrink from this spiritual warfare? See 2 Cor. xii. 7: "There was sent me.....a messenger of Satan, to buffet me." St. Paul beats down his body, and the messenger of Satan buffets him: he and his corruption are already at blows, and the contest grows sharp between them. Heb. xii. 4. The Apostle speaks of resisting "unto blood, striving against sin." Striving against sin and mortifying it, is not so trivial and easy a work, as the generality of professors make it: it will draw tears from the eyes, and groans from the heart. Our Saviour compares it (and indeed the comparison is drawn home) to plucking out the right-eye, and cutting off the right-hand: Mat. v. 29, 30.

Now there are two things, that make this exceeding difficult.

The pain and anguish: and the unnaturalness of it.

And both these are suited to a double distemper too prevalent in the best Christians, whereby the work of mortification is rendered very hard and difficult; and they are,

A sinful nicety, tenderness, and delicacy, utterly unbecoming spiritual soldiers; whereby they are so softened and effeminated, that they cannot endure pain or hardship.

A sinful fondness and compassion, which, being still in part carnal, they do bear unto their carnal part: and this makes mortification seem very unnatural.

1. *Christians, through a spiritual sloth, that hath seized upon them, are grown nice and delicate: and this makes the work of mortification seem very painful.*

A little pain is more intolerable to men accustomed to a tender education, than torments are to others. Truly, Christians, by too much indulging their corruptions, do bring them up tenderly; seldom crossing or molesting them: so that, when they come in earnest to set upon the work of mortification, the extreme anguish and torment of it is such, that they cannot bear it; and so, either they shrink from it, or else perform it very slightly. I may well say, that, through the niceness of Christians, mortification is now-a-days grown so easy and gentle, that corruption itself scarce feels it: some excrescences and superfluities of naughtiness they may possibly prune off; but when is it, that they lay the axe to the root? What is it for a man to pare the nails, or cut the hair?

This goes not to the quick. Truly, that, which Christians now call their mortification, is but very little more: they do but pare away the superfluous and less sensible parts of corruptions, that, of a wild, over-grown thing, which else it would be, they may thereby reduce it to a decorum and decency. And shall I call this mortifying? Is it not, rather, an adorning of lust? Show me the Christian, that stabs sin to the heart, and draws blood at every encounter, that cuts off limb after limb, and member after member; contemning that smart and anguish, which frights tender and delicate Christians from so rough an engagement.

2. There is, in the best, *too much of a sinful fondness and compassion, that makes mortification seem to be cruel and unnatural.*

And how can it be otherwise, while, in the very best, there are still remainders of that other self; I mean, corruption? Every Christian hath a double self, his carnal and his spiritual self; and mortification is as it were self-murder: he doth what in him lies to murder himself, that is his carnal self. Now look how difficult it is for a man to offer violence to himself; for the right-eye to be torn out by the right-hand, and that again to be cut off by the other, so difficult it is (abating only that it is another self that does it) for a Christian to exercise mortification; because it is a kind of self-destruction. Lust is so close and intimate with the soul, so inlaid with the principles and wrought into the very bowels of it; that what the Apostle saith, (Eph. v. 29,) "No man ever yet hated his own flesh," I may apply to this case. No man ever yet hated his fleshly part; that is, with such an utter antipathy and detestation as he ought. With what compassion, or, rather, with what extremity and rage of passion, would a mother see an infant of her own conception delivered up to the slaughter! Truly, there is in all men somewhat of the like natural affection towards the conceptions of their own lust; so that it is with a great deal of reluctance and violence offered to nature, that they expose their infant lusts as soon as born to the sword and slaughter of mortification. Now, until this fondness be removed, and Christians more hardened against their corruptions, (so that their hearts shall not pity them, nor their eyes spare them; though they are their own offspring: though they are so much themselves, yet they can with their own hands thrust the sword of mortification through them, and with delight look upon their gaspings and blood;) this great work can never go forward, proportionably to the great and absolute necessity of it.

ii. As the difficulty, so THE CONSTANCY, THE PERPETUITY OF THIS WORK frights many from engaging in it.

If sin would be laid dead by a blow, most men would for once strike home : but, when they think that mortification is a perpetual quarrel which they must all their lifetime prosecute, without a day's or minute's respite, that still they must be in arms, still upon the watch, and still fighting, without the truce of a breathing allowed them ; this makes some give it over quite as an endless thing, and others to follow it very remissly.

And, truly, unless this work of mortification be pursued with an indefatigable constancy, without intermission, these two evils will necessarily follow.

1. In the interval, lust, after it hath been defeated, will again recruit and gather head, and possibly assault the soul with a redoubled force. And

2. Grace will, for want of exercise, grow unwieldy, inactive, and less fit for service than it was.

If at any time there be a neglect of mortification, all, that was formerly done against corruption, is merely in vain, and but so much labor lost. Lust will rally, after a rout ; and therefore grace, when it hath defeated it, must pursue it close ; still gaining upon it, and disputing its ground by inches, till it hath at last quite forced it out of the soul. Men, that are to empty a pond, in which there are many springs rising, must be still casting out the water as it is still bubbling up : if they stop, the pond grows presently full, and their labor is again to begin. Truly, our hearts are like this pond, in which there are many springs still spouting out corrupt streams : mortification is the cleaning out of this pond : if Christians do but for awhile cease and give it over, the heart grows full again of all manner of wickedness, and the work is set as far back as it was at the beginning. These incessant pains few will bear ; and therefore it is, that this work of mortification is generally so much neglected in the world.

iii. The many DISCOURAGEMENTS, WITH WHICH EVEN CHRISTIANS THEMSELVES MEET IN THE WORK OF MORTIFICATION, do make them backward to it, and negligent in it.

Many discouragements I might here mention, both from without and from within : as, the evil examples of unmortified professors : the auxiliaries, that lust receives from the policy and power of Satan ; the manifold enforcements, which, when a temptation is in its hour, it hath from objects, occasions, and such like outward

advantages; the inward, secret conspiracies of the heart itself with lust: all which, and many more, are great discouragements unto Christians; making not only the hands of their enemies strong against them, but many times their own hands weak and their hearts faint: so that they are ready to say they shall one day fall by the hands of these mighty lusts; and that, therefore, it is as good to give themselves up for lost men, and never more to struggle against what they cannot possibly subdue. And, truly, did not the Spirit of God, in the midst of these sad thoughts, break in with extraordinary supports and assistances, all their hopes and confidences would here give up the ghost; and they would abandon themselves over to the power of their lusts, to be captivated by them at their pleasure.

But, omitting these, I shall only speak to two great discouragements, drawn from the bad event of an endeavored mortification.

The little visible success which they gain, after all their pains and labor.

The many sad defeats and foils, which, notwithstanding all, they receive from their lusts.

1. *The little visible and apparent success of the exercise of mortification*, doth mightily dishearten even true Christians from it.

And this discouragement is by so much the greater, if, before their conversion, conscience was tender, and lust never outrageous, nor broke out into any scandalous foul sin. Such Christians can hardly perceive the difference, between themselves now, and themselves long ago. After all the labor and toil which they have taken in mortification, they are, they think, but almost where they were: little progress have they made, little ground have they got: they are not conscious to themselves of any willful neglect: they have constantly stood upon their guard, kept their watch, carefully used the means for mortification; and yet, after all, lust, they think, is still as prevalent with them as before: and this discourageth them from taking so great pains, as they think, to so little purpose.

Now there are two grounds, why the success of mortification is not always visible and apparent.

(1) Because of the rooted *permanency* of every lust in the soul.

Mortification doth not utterly kill, but only wound and weaken sin. And, therefore, though you single out any one particular lust, and set the whole strength of grace against it; though you do as Samuel did with Agag, hew it in pieces before the Lord, so that you would think it should never be able to stir more: yet it is in this like to worms and serpents: every piece will move: the very

next temptation, object, or opportunity, will draw forth the same corruption again, which you thought you had utterly killed. Mortification doth not put sin to death, so as that it shall never move more in the soul. And therefore Christians, aiming at this death and extirpation of sin, think that all their labor is but lost, when they find every one of those corruptions to stir and move as they did formerly. And this discourageth them.

(2) Another thing, that hinders the visible success of mortification, is, the great *variety and multiplicity* of corruptions.

Whereby it comes to pass, that one follows upon the neck of another; and, as soon as one is beaten down, another riseth up: so that, though a Christian exercise a daily mortification, yet he can scarcely tell whether the number of his enemies be diminished or augmented: every day he fights, and every day he conquers; and, yet, every day he hath as many to fight against and to conquer, as before. What a discouragement this is, any one who is loth to put himself to a great deal of trouble to no purpose, may easily imagine. "Oh!" saith such an one, "could I perceive that I gained advantage against my corruptions, that I subdued and put to death any of them, I should count all my pains well bestowed: but, alas! there is such a lust, that I have been struggling against so long, and yet am not free from it: nay, there are so many thousand lusts, that are still rising in me; and, when I turn myself against one, another surpriseth me; if I oppose that, another gets within me. All my victories are in vain: my work is endless; and, still, I have as many enemies to combat with, as at the first." And, hereupon, he is strongly tempted to give over mortification, as a fruitless work.

2. Another great discouragement in the work of mortification, is, *the many sad defeats and foils*, which, notwithstanding all their endeavors, even the best Christians have often received from their lusts.

Though the conquest at the last be assured, yet it is not without many doubtful trials and various successes. St. Paul, the greatest champion that ever fought the Lord's spiritual battles and maintained the cause of grace, yet complains of his captivity to the law of the members, Rom. vii. 23. David, no less a warrior against uncircumcised lusts than against uncircumcised Philistines, yet cries out of his wounds, Ps. xxxviii. 5: "My wounds stink, and are corrupt; because of my foolishness." It would be a very sad and discouraging spectacle, if we could see all the spoils, which Satan and corruption have by force taken from the most eminent

Christian : such a man's "shield of faith" lost, in such an encounter : such a man's "sword of the Spirit" wrested from him, in another : another loseth "the breast-plate of righteousness;" another his "helmet, the hope of salvation," Ephes. vi. 14-17. Yea, there is no Christian, but is in some encounter or other despoiled of part of his armor, and himself taken prisoner. Now, hereby, they are disheartened from again attempting that enemy, whom they have found too hard for them. When they find lust to be an over-match for them, they flee and give place; and conclude it utterly in vain for them with their ten thousand, to make war with him that comes against them with twenty thousand : and so they sit down under the neglect of mortification.

These are some of the grounds, why this great duty is so little practiced among Christians. And what is at the bottom of all this, but only a great deal of spiritual sloth and laziness, that makes them loth to put themselves upon difficulties and hazards; yea and possibly makes them fancy more difficulties and hazards in mortification than indeed there are? Prov. xxvi. 13: "The slothful man saith, there is a lion in the way, a lion is in the streets;" it is a very unlikely thing, that a lion should be in the street; yet this his sloth suggests to him, as an excuse to keep him from the labor of going abroad. Well, what doth this sluggard do? In the next verse, the wise man tells us: "As the door turneth upon his hinges, so doth the slothful man upon his bed:" the door turns often, but gains no ground: still it is where it was. So, truly, it is with a slothful Christian, that neglects mortification for fear of difficulties: let him turn himself to whatsoever he will, yet still he is but upon his hinges: he gains no ground upon his lusts, nor makes any progress towards heaven. Alas! heaven and happiness are not to be obtained with ease: by sitting still and wishing against lust; but by a laborious contending and struggling against it. What saith our Saviour, Matt. xi. 12? "The kingdom of heaven suffereth violence, and the violent take it by force." There must be a holy roughness and violence used, to break through all that stands in our way; neither caring for allurements, nor fearing opposition: but, with a pious obstinacy, and (if I may so call it) frowardness, we must thrust away the one, and bear down the other. This is the Christian, who will carry heaven by force; when the whining, cowardly professor, who only complains of difficulty, but never attempts to conquer it, will be forever shut out.

V. The next thing to be inquired into, is, WHAT THIS NECESSARY AND YET MUCH NEGLECTED DUTY OF MORTIFICATION IS, AND WHEREIN IT DOTH CONSIST.

An exact method would, perhaps, have called for this first ; since it were in vain to press the necessity, and not to open the duty : but I know that there are few here, who, when mention is made of mortification, do not, in the general notion, apprehend it to be some earnest and constant striving against sin, so as to weaken and conquer it : which supposition is a sufficient ground for adjourning the more minute explication of this duty until now.

And herein I shall proceed, negatively, to show you what it is not : which is made apparent by the many counterfeit mortifications that are in the world. Either disciplinary severity, and a pontifical rigor in tormenting, rather than subjecting the outward man ; or else, at best, civil morality, are rested in as true mortification. It will be, therefore, of considerable advantage, to detect and expose to you those appearances of mortification, which yet indeed are not it.

Positively, I shall endeavor to open what is necessarily required unto true mortification, and wherein that great work and duty doth consist.

i. NEGATIVELY, what it is not.

1. *Mortification is not the utter and total extirpation and destruction of sin's in-being in the soul.*

There are a sort of fanatics, or frantics rather, risen up among us, who, by pretending to that in this life unattainable privilege of a perfect immunity from all sin, do make mortification inconsistent with mortality ; and, while they promise to themselves that liberty which God never promised them, they are become the servants of corruption. St. John frequently gives these men the plain lie ; 1 John i. 8 : " If we say that we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us : If we say that we have not sinned, we make God a liar, and his word is not in us : " this is that, which the manifold falls, the greivous outcries, the bitter repentings, the broken bones, and the blood-stained consciences, even of the best and most advanced saints on earth, have too sadly attested beyond all contradiction ; unless it be from those men, to whom habit hath made the difference between sinning and forbearing to sin imperceptible. It is, indeed, the sincere desire and

endeavor of every child of God, so thoroughly to mortify corruption, that it should never more stir, nor tempt; never more move, nor break forth, unto eternity. Oh! it would be a blessed word of promise, if God should say to us concerning our lusts, as Moses did to the Israelites, "Those Egyptians, whom you have seen this day pursuing your souls, ye shall see them again no more forever:" Exod. xiv. 13. No, God is, if I may so say, more provident than to spoil heaven, by forestalling that happiness, which makes it so infinitely desirable: and, therefore, he here suffers these Canaanites to be thorns in our eyes and scourges in our sides, to sweeten the place of our rest; and, when we are most victorious over them, all that we can do is but to make them subject and tributary: they have so possessed the fastnesses of our souls, that there is but one mortification can drive them out; and that is our dissolution. Under the ceremonial law, if an earthen vessel were polluted by any unclean thing, the only way of purification prescribed, was to break it: truly, we are such earthen vessels, though mortification may scour and cleanse us from much of that filth which cleaveth to us; yet we can never be fully purified, till death breaks us to pieces. It was only sin, that brought death into the world; and it is only death, that can carry sin out of the world. So that every true Christian is another Sampson: he slays more of the uncircumcised at his death, than he did in all his lifetime before. It is true, God is many times pleased to vouchsafe eminent and signal successes, in a way of mortification; but yet these are but as it were skirmishing small conquests, obtained by singling out some particular lusts; it is only death, that makes the general defeat and slaughter. And, therefore, as the weakest grace is sufficient to destroy the reign of sin; so the strongest grace, exercised in the most constant and severe course of mortification, is insufficient to destroy its residence

2. *A harsh severity and rigor used only towards the outward man, is not true mortification.*

This is that which blind devotees rest upon; who, by sharp penances, long fastings, and other ways of ignorant will-worship, do go the way rather to destroy themselves than their corruptions. This churlish and rugged way of mortification is altogether as incongruous, as if a man should lay a plaster upon his clothes to cure a wound in his body. Should he tell down rivers of tears for every vain thought, should he fine himself in a thousand prayers for the commission of every sin, should he fast till his skin cleaveth to his bones and his bones stare him in the face; yet all

this would be as far from the mortification of sin, as it is from a satisfaction for sin: all these cannot reach that bottom and center of the soul, in which lust sits enthroned, and despises all the attempts and batteries that men make against the outworks only. But I need not insist much longer on this particular: the greater light, yea, I may say the greater atheism and profaneness of our days, will discharge me from that trouble. Yea, professors themselves, by neglecting that moderation, which they should use towards the outward man, in diet, in attire, or in any other enjoyment; do omit, if not a part of it, if not a means to mortification, yet certainly that sign and character, which should evidence them to all the world, to be mortified persons. The truth is, men now live, as if it nothing at all concerned their souls what their bodies do. Whatsoever these men pretend, yet it must needs be very difficult to believe that there can be humility and mortification in the one, where there is not sobriety and decency in the other.

I will not undertake to prescribe how far a true mortification must, in particular, reach the outward man; yet, in the general, take these two rules.

(1) All that indulgence, which indisposeth to holy and spiritual duties, or hinders us from them or in them, must, by the exercise of mortification, be taken off and removed.

There must be rigor and severity used, even towards the body, if formerly we found the want thereof made us unfit for or remiss, in the duties of religion. It is fittest for your own Christian prudence, to descend unto particulars; and to examine what it is, that indisposeth you, either in hearing, or in praying, or in any other means of communion with God. Whatever it be, whether it proceed from infirmity, or custom and habit, if it be an occasion to hinder the life and spirituality of our duties, mortification must be here set on work, though not without violence and regret unto the outward man. What saith the Apostle, 1 Cor. ix. 27? "I keep under my body, and bring it into subjection:" that is, he made it useful and serviceable to his soul. Where mortification is neglected, even the body, that underling and servile part of man, grows wild and unruly; rebelling against the soul, and hurrying it whither itself will.

(2) All that provision, which indulgence towards the outward man lays in for the flesh to fulfil it in the lusts thereof, must be cut off by the careful exercise of mortification.

Do you find, that the pampering of the outward man, is the strengthening of the old man? That outward ease, plenty, or any.

other conveniences, are but instruments with which lust doth work or objects upon which it works? It is high time for mortification to be exercised; even about those things which are lawful, when once lust turns them into food and nourishment for itself. I leave it to your own experience, to frame instances, and accordingly to proceed in mortification for the future.

These two general rules being supposed, (which it were to be wished professors were more careful in observing,) whatsoever other severity men execute upon themselves, may be called cruelty and will-worship, but cannot be reckoned for true mortification.

3. *The not-breaking-forth of corruption into a scandalous life and conversation, is no evidence of true mortification.*

Many men's lusts are like secret abscesses, that breed within the breast; which are never known, till they prove their deaths. It is not necessary, that unmortified sin should be like a running sore, offensive and noisome to others: it may rankle and fester within, till it become incurable and mortal. Lust hath a large and ample dominion inwards, in the heart: there are thoughts, contrivances, desires, affections, and motions; all which may be altogether unmortified, when yet the life and conversation may be so innocent and blameless, as not to be justly chargeable with the guilt of any one notorious sin. What can *we* judge of such an one, but that he is a very mortified Christian? Yea, but God, who knoweth the heart, yea and possibly his conscience, see abundance of pride, uncleanness, worldliness, unbelief, contempt of God and his ways, reigning and raging within, in all that strength and power which they have gotten to themselves, by so long a continuance, without the least check from mortification.

Now it may be attributed to a threefold cause, why a lust, that is unmortified, doth not always break forth into gross and scandalous sins.

(1) To that quiet, reserved temper and disposition, which some men have naturally.

Their very nature is such, that they will do nothing violently and outrageously; and, therefore, they will not sin so. Some men are rude sinners, and boisterously wicked: others are of a more calm and retired spirit; and yet, possibly, as far from being mortified as the other. Take a true Christian, who hath often sweat and toiled in mortifying some particular prevailing lust and corruption to which his temper inclined him, as suppose passionateness or the like, and compare him to one of a smooth, sedate, and even temper, though altogether unacquainted with the great work

of mortification; and how unlovely shall the passion of the mortified Christian appear, in comparison with the sedateness of the unmortified sinner! Such is the great advantage which a man's natural inclination gives, either to the acting or suppression of sin. And, therefore, take this rule, by the way, in examining thy mortification: Never reflect upon that seeming prevalence thou hast over those lusts, which are not strengthened and advantaged by the bent and tendency of thy natural inclination; for this will prove a very deceitful mark: rather look what success thou gainest over the sin of thy nature, be it what it will; or against those sins, the mortification of which no natural temper can ever counterfeit, such as unbelief, hardness of heart, impenitence, and such-like spiritual sins, which are common to all men of what temper and disposition soever: otherwise, to conclude that corruption is mortified and subdued, because thou breakest not forth into such sins to which perhaps thy natural inclination is not so strongly bent, is but a false and deceitful evidence.

(2) The not-breaking-out of unmortified corruption, may often be imputed to the absence of temptations, opportunities, and occasions of sinning, and such-like outward advantages; which were they present, would certainly draw it forth into act.

Either the devil is wanting to men's corruptions, in fitting them with suitable temptations; or else God's providence, in fitting them with a convenient opportunity: one or both of which, is the true reason why we see no more wickedness committed in the world (though it doth now too fearfully abound) and not the weakening or abating of the power and rage of it by mortification. When the Prophet told Hazael what cruelties he should act upon the Jews; what, saith he, "Is thy servant a dog, that he should do this great thing?" 2 Kings viii. 13. While he was in his private estate, he could not think his nature had been so cruel: but, when he was advanced to the kingdom of Syria, and had subdued the Israelites; then, the temptations of a conqueror assault him, and he shows that cruelty which before lay lurking and dormant. And so it was with Peter, in denying his Lord and Master. Now look inward a little: you pretend, perhaps, to be mortified persons; and why? "Oh! not any one sin, besides common failings, hath broken from me so long time." Hath there not? Tell me; were not temptations wanting, to provoke and draw out thy corruptions? Were not opportunities wanting, to let out thy corruptions? If they were, this thy not sinning proceeds not from a mortified heart, but from a negligent devil, or a gracious God

That man gets a good opinion of himself at too easy a rate, who thinks himself mortified for not sinning when he is not tempted.

(3) It may be imputed to a powerful restraint, laid upon the eruptions of lust.

This hinders them from breaking out into act; but, yet, this doth not mortify nor weaken them. I do not now speak of that almighty restraint, that God, in his ordinary providence, lays upon the lusts of men; by which, indeed, he mortifies them, even as he mortified Jeroboam's hand, which he stretched out against the Prophet, by taking the power of sinning from them: but of that restraint, which men themselves lay upon their lusts, who yet are altogether ignorant of and unexperienced in the spirituality of this duty of mortification. Men may lay a check and curb upon their lusts: that whereas formerly they let themselves loose unto all manner of profaneness and impiety; they may now relinquish that excess of riot, and bind their corruptions within a narrower pale and compass, and thereby appear both to themselves and others to be much mortified and changed Christians.

This restraint may proceed from a twofold cause.

[1] From gross *hypocrisy* and deep *dissimulation*, for secular ends and advantages, with which the extravagance of wickedness possibly would not consist.

And, truly, we may justly fear, that much of that seeming mortification, which is among professors, stands only upon this bottom. Certainly, that sinful liberty, which they allow themselves where it is not prejudicial to their worldly interests, is a very sad ground to suspect all other restraints that they impose upon themselves, to be from no higher a principle, than compliance with the genius and current of the times. Such men's cursed hypocrisy shall, in hell, bear the punishment of all those sins, that itself hindered from being committed: that is all the reward it shall have.

[2] This restraint may, likewise, proceed from the strength of *convictions*, and the terrors of a *natural conscience*.

Wicked men, many times, dare not commit those sins, upon which, notwithstanding, their hearts and affections are bent: should they, conscience would hurl firebrands in their faces, and hunt them with fearful threatenings and outcries. And some there are, who, without question, do stand in as much dread of an enraged conscience, as they do of hell itself. This keeps men in some awe and order, that they dare not commit sin, with so much impudence and greediness, as otherwise they would do;

but, yet, this amounts not to a true mortification: this all proceeds from the power of conscience, forcibly reigning in corrupt nature; not from the power of grace, changing that nature. As it is with wild beasts kept up in a grate, they cannot ravin after their prey; but, still, their natures are ravenous: so it is with conscience: it many times coops up men, that they cannot ravin after their lusts, as were they free from such a restraint they would; but, still, their natures continue unsanctified, their sins unmortified, and their affections, desires, and delights eager after them, though they dare not commit them; yea, and, possibly, (which is the usual effect of a forcible restraint,) by so much the more violent, by how much the more debarred from them.

4. *The relinquishment and forsaking of a sin, is not an evidence of a true mortification.*

I do not here mean only such a temporary forsaking of sin as theirs was in 2 Pet. ii. 20, who, having "escaped the pollutions of the world, through lust, were again entangled:" certain it is, that these men's corruptions were but for a time dissembled, and never mortified. But I take it for a perpetual relinquishment and an utter divorce, so that the soul never again returns to the commission of it, or at least not with any proportionable frequency and delight. Yet this forsaking of sin, may be without the mortification of it. Take this, in two cases.

(1) When men do change and barter their sins, then there is a forsaking of sin, but no mortifying of it.

Multitudes of lusts lie crowded together in the soul, and each of these must have its alternate reign; and, therefore, when one hath for a while swayed and been the master-lust, it gives place to another, and that to another, till the sinner hath run through the bead-roll of them. And, therefore, the Apostle, Tit. iii. 3, speaks of serving divers lusts and pleasures: divers, in their turns and successions. This deceives many: they find an old tyrannical lust, that hath kept them under long and laborious thralldom, begin to grow weak and feeble, and hereupon they conclude it is mortified in them; but, alas! they do not observe some other lust reigning in its stead: it doth but give way to make room for another; so that, though the stream of corruption be diverted and turned out of one channel, yet it runs with as full a tide in another. Let not him, who, of a sensual person, is grown a worldling; of a profane person, a hypocrite; think that he hath mortified any one of these lusts. A changed man, indeed, he is; changed from one extreme

to another, from sin to sin : but this change is far from mortification.

(2) When a lust rather forsakes the sinner, than he it ; then there may be a perpetual separation, where there is no mortification.

There are sins, that are proper and peculiar to such an estate and season of a man's life, upon the alteration of which they vanish and disappear : the sins of youth drop off from declining age, as incongruous and unbecoming : the man doth, as it were, outgrow them. Now if he look back, and take a view of the numberless vanities and follies he hath left, how deadened his heart and affections are to those things in which before he delighted, this may possibly make him think himself a very mortified man ; when, alas ! he hath not so much forsaken his sins as they him : so long as his natural vigor could relish the temptation, and so long as it comports with his state and condition ; so long he served it, and lived in it. Let not such a man deceive himself : though now he hath forsaken it, yet he never mortified it : the sin deserted him, and fell off of its own accord : this fruit of the flesh was never beaten down by mortification, but, being full ripe, fell off of itself without violence.

5. *Every victory and conquest gained over sin, is not a true mortification of it.*

I doubt not, but many unregenerate persons have yet had eminent successes in opposing their corruptions ; so as to hinder them, even when they have been raging and impetuous, from breaking forth, either to the defiling or wounding of their consciences ; nay, sometimes so far as sensibly to abate the power and force of them : but all this amounts not to a true mortification. And that, upon a double account.

(1) Because all such conquests are achieved by principles altogether foreign and extraneous unto grace.

That hath no hand in the work : but natural conscience, acted by slavish fear or some other carnal consideration, manageth all the fights and scuffles, that wicked men maintain against their lusts. And,

(2) Because, though by these victories lust seems to be weakened in its branches, yet it is much strengthened in its root.

If one sin be pulled down, it is that another may be advanced. All the conquests, that wicked men obtain, do not destroy the government, but only change the governors. Nay, indeed, it is only one contrary lust, that fights against the other ; and, which soever of them is defeated, yet still the body of sin thrives.

ii. Now, seeing there are so many things like true mortification in the world, it nearly concerns us to beware, lest we be deceived by them; and so flatter ourselves with a false evidence for life.

To prevent which, it will be necessary, to open to you this great duty of mortification **POSITIVELY**.

And in this, possibly, some useful progress may be made, when these two things have been searched into.

Wherein it doth consist.

What things are indispensably required thereunto.

1. For the first, I take *the nature of mortification* to consist in these three things: in *weakening* sin's root and principle; in *suppressing* its risings and motions; and, in *restraining* its outward actings and eruptions.

It is the first of these, that makes the other two any parts of this true mortification. Let a man oppose himself, all his days, against the workings of corruption within, and the actings of it without; yet, unless the radical power and force of corruption be in some good measure abated, let him not think he hath mortified any one lust. It is a task utterly impossible to kill it, if it be not first wounded at the heart. It were easy to demonstrate the vanity and failure of all endeavors, to mortify these limbs and out-parts of the old man, unless his vitals be first perished, and his inward strength decayed. For,

First. Hereby you can never arrive at any comfortable issue in the work. It is but like beating down leaves from a tree, which will certainly sprout forth again: the root is still remaining in the ground, full of sap and juice; and will supply every branch of corruption with the same nourishment, and make it flourish into the same strength and verdure; of which all your endeavors will but fruitlessly attempt to despoil it.

Secondly, Hereupon finding no better success, but that, after all, he sees himself deluded, and that lust is not mortified: still, as thick fogs and steams of it rise within him as ever; still, it is as unruly and boisterous as ever; and more to suppress and weaken it, in his way, cannot be done: hereupon, I say, he despairingly gives over all future contests, and abandons himself to the power and violence of his corruptions; and those, which before he strove in vain to stop, he now spurs on and drives furiously towards perdition.

This is the fearful, and yet too frequent issue, of such endeavors, as have their beginnings merely from the convictions of natural

conscience: they receive no encouragement nor recruit from the decay of corruption; and, therefore, usually expire, either in a loose formality, or in a professed dissoluteness. Very sad it is to consider how much pains and industry have been lost in struggling against sin, only upon this account; that, to all their endeavors, there hath been no foundation laid, in the radical and inward weakening of the habit and body of corruption.

This inward weakening of corruption is twofold:

The first proceeds from that mortal and incurable wound, which the body of sin received in the first implantation of grace. Then was the head of this serpent crushed; and, whereas before it had the power and authority of a king and sovereign in the soul, in that very moment it was deposed, and hath ever since harassed it only as a rebel and traitor.

The second proceeds from those redoubled strokes, with which mortified Christians follow their corruptions; whereby they every day and hour draw blood and spirits from them, and so by degrees waste and weaken them. The first, indeed, is not any part of that mortification, whereof I am now treating; but rather a necessary antecedent to it: and the latter would not be mortification, did it not presuppose the former; for therefore doth a man, by opposing the motions and actings of corruption in his daily conversation, weaken the habit of it, because of that first weakening which it received in conversion. The Apostle, speaking of this weakening of sin, calls it a crucifixion of it with Christ; Rom. vi. 6: "Our old man is crucified with him, that the body of sin might be destroyed." Now look, how was Christ crucified? First he was hung upon the cross, and then pierced with a spear: so, truly, it is in the mortification of corruption: our first conversion unto God hangs it upon the cross, whence it shall never come down alive; and then our constant endeavors are as so many spears continually piercing it, till the body of this old man becomes all over one great wound, whence daily issue out the blood and spirit, the strength and vigor, and at length life itself. This is it, which makes the keeping under of the motions of corruption, and the keeping in of its eruptions, to be true mortification in the children of God; when yet the very same endeavors, in unregenerate men, are nothing so. Sin, in them, is upon the throne, and not upon the cross; and therefore they cannot wound, nor pierce it: they cannot weaken, nor destroy it.

"Yea," but may some say, "must there, in true mortification, be not only a striving against the motions and actings of corrup-

tion, but also the weakening of its root and principle? Alas! then I fear all my endeavors have been fruitless and in vain. Some success, indeed, I have gained against the eruptions of lust; but still I find the temptations of it as strong and violent as ever: I perceive no weakenings, no decays in it; but it rather grows more rebellious and headstrong every day than another; and, therefore, all that I have done against them, hath not been true mortification."

This, no question, is the case of many a mortified Christian: and, therefore, for answer hereunto,

First. Consider: possibly thou mayest be herein mistaken, that thou thinkest that corruption moves stronger than before, when only thou takest more notice of its motions than thou didst before.

When the heart is made tender and soft by a long exercise of mortification, a less temptation troubles it more, than formerly a greater would. Every the least rising of corruption in the heart seems now a desperate and heinous thing; whereas, before, through the deadness and stupidity of conscience, it was made light of and scarce regarded. This seeming strength of sin is not a sign that sin is not dying; but rather a sign that thou art spiritually alive, because so very sensible of its motions. The stronger the opposition is, which grace makes against sin, the stronger also will sin seem to work, though indeed it never was weaker. If a strong-natured man fall into a little sickness and distemper, it seems more violent and raging in him, than a greater would in another of a weak constitution; because the natural vigor conflicts more with the disease: he is unquiet and turbulent, and tosses to and fro, merely because the strength of nature is impatient till the sickness be removed. So is it here: if a gracious soul fall into any sinful distemper, what conflicts and agonies are there, as if he were in the very pangs of death! Doth this argue the strength of corruption? No: nothing less: it rather argues the strength of grace, which makes the soul to wrestle thus impatiently, till the corruption be overcome and removed. None so much complain of the strength and power of their sins, as those, in whom it is unto some good degree mortified; because they have that contrary principle of grace in them, which makes them sensible of the least risings and motions of it.

Secondly. Consider: corruption may act strongest in the soul, then, when it is in itself weakest. It may be very strong in acting, when it is but weak in being.

You know with what a great blaze a wasted candle goes out.

and with what violent pangs and strugglings men use to depart this life: so, sometimes, a mortified lust makes such a blaze, as if it would set the whole soul on fire; when, indeed, it is but expiring: it so struggles, as if it would master grace; when, indeed, it is but its last pull and death-pang. What is said of Christ when hanging on the cross, Mark xv. 37: "He cried with a loud voice, and" then "gave up the ghost;" the same may I say of corruption hanging on the cross with a loud voice in a temptation, as if it were not only alive, but strong and vigorous: yea, but this loud voice is many times its last voice; and then it gives up the ghost, and draws its last breath crying.

Thirdly. Some accidental improvement may make a lust that is subdued and truly mortified, yet seem no way weakened; but rather much more active and vigorous than ever before.

Sometimes, the temperament of the body may so alter, as to cause a greater propensity to such or such a corruption than formerly: and, sometimes, a man may lie in the way of more temptations than ever. Now, upon such advantages as these, corruption, though it be mortified, yet will be stirring: yea, and be stirring, it may be, more violently than ever it did while it was unmortified; for, though then it had more strength and power of its own, yet it had not such odds of grace, as through these external aids it hath gotten.

Fourthly. What is abated in the strength of lust's temptations, is many times eked out by the temptations of the devil.

And these, though they are of different kinds, yet are so closely and so indiscernibly pieced together, that the soul, not knowing what must be imputed to the strength of its own corruption, and what to the violent assaults of the devil, ascribes all to his lust, and then sadly looks upon himself as an unmortified sinner: and unmortified sin, when it moves and tempts only of its own accord, will not seem to be so raging and impetuous, as a mortified sin will, when it is blown up by the temptations and injections of Satan: and therefore Christians, not being able to distinguish, as indeed none sufficiently can, are necessarily troubled with many fears and doubts, whether or no corruption, which acts so strongly, be at all weakened in them. And, indeed, if the devil helps any men's corruptions by his temptations, they are especially those, with which mortification hath already dealt and subdued. In wicked men, he sees lust able enough to subsist of itself, and to manage the affairs of its own dominions; and therefore leaves them to the plague of their own heart to destroy them: but, in the

children of God, where this enemy is broken and conquered, he backs and enforces it; lends it auxiliaries of objects, and suggestions, and numberless temptations; leads it on to the combat; and, by many wiles and methods, enables it to molest, if not to foil the most conquering and mortified Christian: hereupon the soul, finding such a wonderful recruit of strength and vigor in corruption, presently concludes it is all its own, and that certainly it was never yet subdued, never weakened in him.

So then, although where true mortification is exercised, there corruption is weakened and doth decay; yet this decay is not always discernible.

2. The next thing is, to show you *what is of necessity required thereunto*.

You have already heard, that mortification consists of two parts, the weakening of the habit, and the constant endeavor of repressing the motions and restraining the eruptions, of sin. Accordingly, two things are thereunto necessarily required:

(1) There cannot be any exercise of true mortification, where there is not a vital *principle and habit of grace*, radically to weaken and destroy it.

It is not nature, it is not conscience, it is not education, it is not conviction, nor is it any other principle, but grace alone, that is a fit match for corruption. How can it with reason be supposed, that, where there is nothing else but sin, any thing should destroy the power of sin? What, though one lust quarrels with and contradicts another? And what, though conscience contradicts them both? Yet the main body of lust is not concerned in these petty quarrels. Some lust or other must be chief in the soul, where grace is not advanced as the prevailing principle; and, whether this lust be set up and that pulled down, is not much material: still, the regality and tyranny of sin is equally maintained and upheld, by the one as by the other; and, till grace dissolves this government, and be laid as the axe to the root of the tree, all our endeavors after mortification will be but vain and fruitless attempts, which lust will easily baffle. Hence, I infer,

First. How necessary is it to our comfortable undertaking this great work of mortification, to see that the first grace of our conversion be true and saving!

Alas! where there never was conversion wrought, there never was mortification exercised. The killing of sin is not a work, that can be done by a dead, but by a living man. I should be loth to cast in doubts and scruples, that should more trouble than benefit

you: yet give me leave to say, that, unless the evidence of the truth of your grace be in some good proportion cleared up to you, your hands must needs be faint and feeble in conflicting against your lusts: how know you, that all your strugglings and strivings are not from weak and insufficient principles, and consequently far short of mortification? I speak it, not that you should abate your endeavors; but to quicken you, to look after the truth and sincerity of grace; which when you have assured to yourselves, you may be likewise certain, that, though in all your conflicts you may not find a visible decay of the strength of sin, yet it is in the root and principle of it insensibly weakened.

Secondly. See also what the sad and deplorable condition of wicked men is, who are strangers to the life of grace.

Without mortification, no life is to be expected: without grace, no mortification can be exercised: and what doth this, when it is cast up, amount to, less than the eternal damnation of such men? The war, which we are to wage against our lusts, admits of no other terms, but to kill or to be killed: either the blood of your dearest sins must be spilt, or the blood of your precious souls. Is it not now a sad thing for men, in such a merciless war, to be thrust naked upon the sharp swords of their enemies? So it is with sinners, who are many times by conscience or convictions thrust on to fight with armed and cruel lusts, and yet have neither weapons to wound them nor to defend themselves. What can be imagined more sad, than is the case of these men? On the one hand, conscience scourgeth them; on the other, sin wounds: conscience drives them on; corruption beats them back: and yet, in all these conflicts, never can they obtain so much success, as to subdue the least and weakest lust.

What should these men do? Should they give over this opposition, such as it is; and sit still, under despair of mortification? No: let them still strive and struggle, and make what strength they can, and act as far against sin as natural conscience will carry them. Let not the doctrine which you have heard to-day, of a carnal man's impotence to mortify any one sin, slacken your endeavors: still press upon it. For,

First. Though all, that you can do without grace, will not amount to a true mortification; yet it may cause much outward reformation: though, hereby, you cannot kill corruption; yet you may mightily curb it.

It is true, this, when done, will not avail to save you; but yet, suppose the least, it will avail to mitigate your punishment, and

abate the degrees of torment: and, certainly, that man never had a right apprehension of hell, who doth not account the striking off the least degree of wrath infinitely more worth, than all the pains and trouble of an attempted mortification.

Secondly. Though you cannot mortify corruption without grace, yet, when you oppose it with the power you have, God may give you in the grace that you want.

While carnal, you cannot pray, nor perform any other spiritual duty in grace; yet you may and ought to do it for grace; so, here, though your struggling against sin be not mortification, without grace; yet ought you to persist in it, that it may be mortification, through grace. How know you but that conflict, which was begun between the flesh and the flesh, may end in a victory of the spirit over the flesh? Certainly, it is far more probable, that that man should obtain true mortification, who earnestly strives against his lusts; than he, who willingly yields himself up as a slave unto them.

(2) Another requisite unto mortification, is the *influence of the Spirit of God*, drawing forth this inward grace, and acting it to the suppression of sinful motions and sinful eruptions.

And, therefore, the text tells us, "If ye, through the Spirit, do mortify." Though grace be wrought in the heart, yet it is not in our power to act it; but the same Spirit, that implanted it, alone must excite it: he must marshal it, and set it in array: he must head it, and lead it on; and, under his conduct, it will certainly prove victorious. I might here, at large, show you what aid, force, and recruit, the Spirit brings us in for our assistance in the work of mortification, that the Apostle should here attribute it unto him. But I shall only briefly touch upon this point, and so proceed.

[1] The Spirit discovers the sin, that is to be mortified.

He drags it out of its lurking holes; strips it naked to the view of the soul; uncases its deceits; discloses its methods; shows the ugliness, deformity, and hellishness of it; tells the soul what a desperate and sworn enemy it is against its eternal happiness, and what an endless train of woes, and plagues, and torments it draws after it: and, hereby, he highly exasperates the heart to a resolution, that, since it is opportunely delivered into his hands, it shall no more escape alive. Now this assistance unto mortification the Spirit lends us, as he is the author of conviction; John xvi. 8: "He will reprove the world of sin."

[2] The Spirit doth inwardly and really, by the immediate

working of his own power, gradually weaken and destroy the habit and principle of corruption.

He, with his own hands, wounds the old man, breaks the hard heart, takes out the stony heart, and gives a heart of flesh. He burns up and consumes all that dross and corruption, that lie in the heart; and is, therefore, compared unto fire; Mat. iii. 11: "He shall baptize you with the Holy Ghost, and with fire;" that is, with the Holy Ghost working as fire, purifying and refining you as the fire doth metals; who is therefore called, Isa. iv. 4, "The Spirit of judgment, and of burning." The Spirit of judgment, that is, he judgeth between what is flesh and what is spirit in the heart; and separates them, the one from the other; and the Spirit of burning; when they are so severed, he preys, as fire on stubble, upon that which is corrupt and fleshly, till he hath consumed it.

[3] The Spirit brings home and applies the efficacy of the cross and death of Jesus Christ unto the soul, in which there is contained a sin-mortifying virtue.

Our old man was crucified with him; and, therefore, it is mortified in us. The inscription on the cross might have been, not only "Jesus, the King of the Jews," but "Satan, prince of this world, and sin, that tyrant of the heart, are all here crucified." I might here insist on that influence, that the death of Christ hath upon the death of sin, both as the meritorious and as the procuring cause of it; but of this I intend at large to speak, under another head. Now what a lifeless thing were a crucified Christ, if the Spirit did not act him and bring him from the cross; nay, bring him with the cross into the heart, and there conform it to the fellowship of his sufferings! Saith Christ, concerning the Spirit, John xvi. 15, "He shall take of mine, and shall show it unto you." Indeed, whatever power there is, either in the death, resurrection, or intercession of Christ, to any spiritual end, it becomes effectual, only by the declaration and application of it to the soul by the Spirit.

[4] The Spirit is both the author and finisher of the whole work of sanctification in us.

We are said to be "sealed by him unto the day of redemption:" Eph. iv. 30. Now what are the effects of a seal?

1st. It gives firmness and stability to our spiritual estate

Having received the seal of the Spirit, we are inviolable; like that book in the Revelations, which none in heaven, or earth, or hell can break open.

2dly. It gives security and assurance concerning our eternal estate.

Receiving the earnest of the Spirit, we also receive our salvation ratified and confirmed to us as under God's hand and seal.

3dly. A seal imprints an image upon the wax, and receives the impression of it.

And, indeed, this is that, on which the two former depend. A seal adds no firmness nor assurance to a deed, unless some impression be thereby made. It is but an airy assurance, a void evidence, an insignificant charter for heaven, which hath not on it the print of the Spirit's seal. Now the impress of this seal is the very image and superscription of God, which, when the heart is like wax made soft and pliable, is in a man's regeneration stamped upon it, and in the continual progress of our sanctification conformed more perfectly to the similitude of God. This work of sanctification, which the Spirit begins and carries on, hath but two parts: as the one is a living unto holiness, so the other is a dying unto sin; so that, if the Holy Ghost be a sanctifying, he must also be a mortifying Spirit. The image of God bears but this double aspect; the one, towards grace, which is fresh, vigorous, and lively; the other, towards sin, which is pale, ghastly, and dying; and the same Spirit imprints both these at once upon the soul; and, therefore, the death of sin is to be ascribed to him, no less than the life of grace.

What abundant support and consolation may we hence reap! Are not your hearts ready to fail and sink within you, when you see such clusters of sinful thoughts swarming about you, such violent hurries and careers of sinful desires and sinful affections, such numberless monsters of callow and unfledged lusts, such a crowd of grown and noisome temptations able and well appointed for the battle, such snares laid for you without, such treachery hatched against you within? Do not your hearts, I say, sink within you, when you consider that you must break through all these: not as men that run the gauntlet, to receive a scourge from one, and a wound from another; but as triumphant, as conquerors, routing, scattering, slaughtering these forces of hell, and, what is worse, of your own hearts? What strength can you make? Will you muster up the poverty, the nakedness, the weakness, the languishment, the wounds of your souls, by which to achieve this great enterprise? Or, will you bring forth and marshal your graces? Alas! do you think to obtain the conquest as the Jebusites

presumed, by the blind and the lame, weak and imperfect things? And yet, besides these, what other auxiliaries have you? What other, besides these! yes, the Spirit of God himself is pleased to enrol and list himself in this warfare; and, though we are weak and have no right against that great company that comes up against us; yet "not by might, nor by power, but by my Spirit, saith the Lord." What are the deeds of the body to the power of the Spirit? What are principalities, and powers, and spiritual wickednesses compared to that God, who is far above all principality and power, who is the Spirit of Holiness? Go forth boldly, therefore, and fight the Lord's battles against these uncircumcised, though gigantic lusts: the sons of Anak, with whom thou seemest to thyself but as a grasshopper, rush on thee; yet the sword of the Lord and of Gideon can destroy the whole host of them. Wilt thou shrink from this engagement, when thou hast so much the odds of thy corruptions? When the Spirit of God stands by to encourage thee, to help and assist thee? The prophet tells the Israelites, Isa. xxxi. 3, that the Egyptians' horses were but "flesh, and not spirit," and therefore their help was but vain. I may tell you, your enemies are but flesh, "fleshly lusts, which war against the soul:" but your helper is the Spirit, and therefore their opposition is in vain. Never yet was it known, that that soul, who engaged the Spirit of God in the quarrel, ever came off with less than a victory. Though thou hast formerly gone out in thine own strength, and thereby betrayed thine own weakness; and hast got nothing but many a deep wound, many a sad fall, many a sore bruise: yet now call in the Spirit to thine assistance: he can root out and destroy every prevailing lust: he can reinforce thy scattered graces: he can revive thy drooping and fainting soul: he can strengthen thy feeble knees, and thy weak hands, and make thee more than a conqueror. "Hast thou not known? hast thou not heard, that the everlasting God, the Lord, the Creator of the ends of the earth, fainteth not, neither is weary? ...He giveth power to the faint; and to them, that have no might, he increaseth strength." Isa. xl. 28, 29.

Thus you see wherein true mortification consists; in the habitual weakening of the principle of corruption, and in the actual curbing of its motions: and what is thereunto necessarily required; the inward root of grace, and the influences of the Holy Spirit to draw it forth and act it.

VI. The next thing, that I shall proceed unto, is, to LAY DOWN SOME PARTICULARS, WHEREBY YOU MAY EXAMINE AND TRY YOUR MORTIFICATION, whether it be right and saving.

If you value eternal life itself, you will likewise value that light, though it be but in its first dawn and weakest glimmerings, that shall discover your interest in it. This interest stands upon nothing more sure than our mortification: "If ye mortify, ye shall live." Yea, but we are in this work subject to mistakes and errors; so that it is not a more difficult thing rightly to exercise it, than it is to know when we do so. Will it not be sad and astonishing, when men, who have been professors of religion, Christians of no mean account both in their own as well as in the eyes of others; yet shall, at last, be dragged down to hell, and there be eternally murdered by those very sins, the mortification of which they made their best and clearest evidence for heaven? The trial, therefore, being of so vast concernment, I shall give it you in these following particulars.

i. LET THY CONTENDING AGAINST SIN BE WHAT IT WILL OR CAN, YET, IF IT BE NOT JOINED WITH A SINCERE ENDEAVOR AFTER AN UNIVERSAL OBEDIENCE UNTO GOD IN THE PERFORMANCE OF DUTIES, IT IS NOT, NEITHER CAN IT BE, TRUE MORTIFICATION.

This is that, in which many deceive themselves. They find a perplexing lust within, that troubles their conscience and disturbs their peace: the exceeding guilt of it fills them with bitterness, dread, and horror; and still it will be thus with them, till they have beaten it down and subdued it. They vow, and pray, and watch, and strive against it: they cut off all occasions, that should draw it forth; all provisions, that should relieve and support it; and do whatsoever may be done towards the killing of it. Yea, but all this while they are negligent and careless in other duties, which are not of so immediate concernment to that particular lust: they do not strive to follow God in all his ways: if they think one duty will do it, they neglect all the rest. Let not such men think that they do indeed mortify any one corruption.

This is a very common distemper; and scarcely any thing is more ordinary, than for men to struggle against corruption, and yet neglect duty. If vows, purposes and resolutions be, in their apprehension, the most opposite means for the beating down of that sin that disquiets them, these they make, and possibly keep them: but, for other duties, as prayer, meditation, reading, the

keeping alive of a holy and spiritual frame of heart, and such duties as should fill up the whole course and measure of Christianity, these they live in a wretched neglect, if not contempt of.

Let such men know, that, whatever their success in this way may seem to be, yet they never truly mortified any one corruption. He only is the mortified man, who labors and endeavors after universal obedience. It is not the vehement opposition, that you make against any particular lust, that argues you to be mortified Christians; but, rather, the universal and general frame and temper of your hearts towards holiness. And therefore saith the Apostle, 2 Cor. vii. 1: "Let us cleanse ourselves from all filthiness, of the flesh and spirit:" that is, let us mortify in ourselves all sin and corruption. But how must this be done? Why, says the Apostle, "perfecting holiness in the fear of God;" that is, giving holiness all its parts, that it shall not be defective in any one duty: then, and not till then, will lust be to any purpose mortified, when a perfect holiness is aimed at and endeavored, in the whole course of a man's life and conversation.

Now try yourselves by this. When you are troubled with a perplexing lust, be it what it will, which, for your own quiet, you must subdue, you use against it those means and helps, which you think are most directly destructive of it: this is well. Yea, but let me ask you, setting aside that corruption, is not the general frame and course of your lives estranged from communion with God; careless and neglectful of holy and spiritual duties; vain, earthly, sensual, carnal? If it be, however thou mayst prevail over that particular corruption, yet, conclude upon it, thou knowest not what true mortification means.

ii. THAT MORTIFICATION IS NOT TRUE NOR SAVING, THAT OPPOSETH ITSELF AGAINST CORRUPTION, ONLY WITH THE EXCEPTION AND RESERVATION OF ONE PARTICULAR SIN.

Never deceive yourselves: though you should have contested, even all your days, against all the lusts of which your hearts were ever conscious, except one, yet you never mortified any one. One lust, that hath obtained a pass from you, to go to and fro unmolested, to deal and traffic with the heart undisturbed, will be as certain perdition to your souls, as if every lust that lies, lurking within, should rage forth into act.

In a man, it is true, there are some such parts, that if you wound him there, you need not wound him any where else: if you wound the heart, you need not strike the head. But this old man hath no

such vitals : it is not sufficient to destroy him, that you wound him in any one part ; but he must be made, as our natural condition is described, from the crown of the head to the soul of the foot, full of wounds and bruises. It is in vain to cry, with Naaman, "The Lord pardon thy servant in this, or in that thing." Dost thou know what thou cravest ? It is not this or that sin alone, that is unmortified, but all the rest are as unmortified as these : and, should God pardon these unto thee, yet those would as soon condemn thee.

Now try yourselves by this. When you go forth against your sins to battle, is there no one, that your eye spares, nor your heart pities ? Doth the sword of mortification drink the heart-blood of every lust ? When they fly for shelter into your very bosom, can you rend them from thence, and slay them before the Lord ? When corruption cries out, "Oh, spare such a pleasing, delightful lust, such an advantageous and profitable sin," can you answer it, with a holy disdain, "Were it yet more pleasant, more profitable, yet die it must and shall ?" Can you then cut off your right hand, when it is lifted up to plead for mercy ? Can you then pluck out your right eye, when it sheds tears to move your compassion ? If so this indeed is to exercise mortification aright. Corruption must, at last, needs fall dead at your feet, where there is no part nor member of it left unwounded. But if, in all thy dealings against corruption, there be any one sin that thou allowest and indulgest to thyself, how great soever thy wrestlings and contendings are against all other, thou never yet experimentally knewest what belongs to mortification. One allowed sin is vent enough for the body of corruption to take breath at ; and, so long as thou permittest it this breathing-place, all endeavors to destroy it are utterly frustrated and in vain.

iii. If thou wouldst judge of the truth of thy mortification, then SEE WHAT THOSE ARGUMENTS AND CONSIDERATIONS ARE, WHEREBY THOU DOST ACTUALLY DEAL AGAINST THY LUSTS.

Now these arguments belong but to two heads. Either they are legal, and such as are drawn only from a sad reflection on the end and issue of sin ; which is shame, death, hell and destruction : or else, they are evangelical ; taken from the nature of sin, as being a transgression and offense against a gracious Father, against a crucified and bleeding Saviour, against a patient and long-suffering Spirit, and many other like aggravations which work kindly and ingenuously upon the heart of a child of God.

Put it now to the question : when a temptation assaults thee,

with what weapons dost thou resist it? With what considerations dost thou over-awe thy heart?

Dost thou only run down to hell, to fetch arguments against sin from thence? Canst thou nowhere else quench these fiery darts, but in the lake of fire and brimstone? Can nothing keep thee from sinning, but only the whip and the rack; wrath, vengeance, horrors, and such dreadful things, which while thy conscience thunders in thine ears, it makes thy soul a hell, and itself becomes thy tormentor? If this be all, know that thy affections are woefully entangled in the sin; and thou art fully resolved upon the commission of it, if there were no punishment to follow. Thou mayst, indeed, by this means be frightened and scared from sin, but never mortified to it.

But the evangelical considerations, of which a child of God makes use to mortify sin, though they work not with that dread and terror, yet are they far more effectual. He sees sin, in its ugly nature; in that spot, stain, and defilement, that it would bring upon his soul: and this causeth in him a true hatred of it. He saith under a temptation, "What! shall I subject a noble and spiritual soul, made capable of enjoying the God of Heaven? Shall I prostitute it to the filthy allurements of a base lust? Shall I blot out and deface the image of God stamped upon me; and degrade myself from the glory of his resemblance, to be conformable to the devil? Can I commit this sin, which heretofore hath drawn blood from my Saviour, and now seeks to draw blood from my conscience? Was not this the very sin, that squeezed clotted blood from him, and was a full load for God himself to bear? Did he die to free me from its condemnation; and shall I, upon every slight temptation, rush into the commission of it? Is there any thing so attractive in it, as to counterpoise the infinite and unsearchable love of Christ? No, O Lord! thy love constraineth me: I cannot do this thing, and sin against so free, so rich, so infinite mercy and goodness." Thus a gracious heart argues against a temptation, and prevails unto a true mortification.

"But," may some say, "may we not make use of legal arguments, of considerations drawn from the wrath of God, the wages of sin, the everlasting damnation to which sinners are appointed, to oppose against a temptation to sin? Are these of no efficacy unto mortification? To this I answer:

First. You may and ought, in dealing against your lusts, to use such arguments as these. Why else doth our Saviour inculcate the fear of God upon his disciples, from the consideration of his

wrath and power? "Fear him, which is able to destroy both soul and body in hell: yea, I say unto you fear him;" Luke xii. 5: and why doth the Apostle, here in the text, threaten the believing Romans with death if they live after the flesh, unless these considerations may be made use of even by gracious souls against their sins? It is no other than a loose notion, to think that the only incentive to obedience, and the only check and restraint of sin, is the consideration of the love of God. It is true, these gospel arguments are most prevailing and constraining: yet let not him, with whom the fear of God's wrath hath no sway to keep him from sinning, think himself a higher attainer: it is rather a stupidity, till we are got past all desert of hell, to be fearless of it.

Secondly. Though these arguments and legal considerations may, of themselves, prevail to keep us from the commission of sin; yet they cannot prevail to the mortification of it. Where there are not other considerations besides these working, these never bring off the heart, but only hold the hands from sin. Nay, if, when a temptation is stirring in the children of God themselves, they only answer it by these legal considerations, that they dare not commit it for fear of hell and wrath hereafter or of shame here; and there be no arguments drawn from the love of God and the relation which they stand in to him, from the death of Christ and the obligation which that lays upon them to obedience, from the deformity of the sin to which they are tempted, from the repugnance and antipathy that is in their regenerate part against it; the abstaining from the commission of that sin is not mortification, but only restraint, even in the children of God themselves.

Thirdly. These legal arguments and considerations, may be of great use and moment in a subserviency unto the mortification of sin.

First. They may hold a temptation or a corruption at bay, till gospel considerations come in to beat it down. Usually, the very first rising of our hearts against a corruption is, from the dangerous consequences of it; from that wrath and vengeance, that are due to it, and will follow upon it: this stops the sin, and puts the soul to a demur; and, though this cannot destroy the corruption, yet it holds it so long, till the new man calls in aid from gospel arguments to mortify it.

Secondly. These legal considerations, when mixed with gospel motives, make them work more strongly and more effectually unto mortification. The consideration of the infinite wrath of God heightens and aggrandizes the infinite love of God in re-

deeming us from it, and so makes it far more enforcing unto mortification.

Fourthly. It is an ill sign, that that heart is very much unmortified, where a temptation or corruption can break through all gospel considerations used against it; and is stopped from breaking into act, only by legal arguments. When a temptation to sin assaults thee, thou runnest, it may be, to the love of God, to the death of Christ, to the ugly nature of sin, to the beautiful nature of holiness, to beat it down by these (the best and most effectual) considerations: if these do not prevail, but the lust and temptation still tumultuates, and is ready just to break forth into act, thy heart is all on a flame with it; and then, possibly, a thought of hell, of vengeance, of everlasting wrath, starts up suddenly and quashes and quenches this temptation, as water cast on a fire. If this be usual with you, your hearts are much unmortified, and your affections strongly engaged unto sin.

iv. A TRULY MORTIFIED MAN SEES THE GREAT EVIL OF AND CHIEFLY LABORS AGAINST THOSE LUSTS, OF WHICH OTHERS, WHO ACT FROM ANY OTHER PRINCIPLE LOWER THAN TRUE GRACE, EITHER TAKE NO NOTICE, OR ELSE DO NOT OPPOSE.

And these are, inward heart sins, and spiritual wickednesses. This is a most sure and infallible character.

1. A mortified man *sets himself especially against inward heart sins.*

Against the bubblings of sinful thoughts, and the uproars of sinful affections, and the bent of sinful desires; those lurking and invisible lusts, which though a hypocrite suffer, yea though he foster, yet may he have a very large testimonial to his saintship, to which almost all the world will be ready to set their hands. These, doth a truly mortified Christian principally complain of, and strive against; and in this, indeed, consists the very truth and sincerity of mortification. As the Apostle saith, Rom. ii. 28, 29, that is not "circumcision, which is outward in the flesh".....but that, which is "of the heart, in the Spirit:" so I may say, that is not mortification, which is outward in the flesh; but that, which is of the heart, in the spirit. A kind of dead palsy and numbness may seize upon the outward members of the body; when yet the heart beats strong and quick, and the brain works with sprightly and vigorous motions and conceptions: so, truly, is it in this case: the old man may sometimes be benumbed in his outward limbs, and deadened as to the executive part of sinning; when yet the head

may work busily in moulding and shaping sinful objects, and the heart may eagerly beat and pant after them. It is usually the highest result and upshot of a wicked man's care and endeavor, to keep lust from boiling over, from raising smoke and ashes about him: and, if he can attain unto this, let the heart be brimful of sin, let the thoughts steep, soak, and stew in malicious, unclean, worldly contrivances and designs; yet these inward motions and ebullitions he lamenteth not, he suppresseth not. Now, though possibly it might seem an easy task to mortify such little, naked, infant things as thoughts are, that flutter up and down in the soul; and that a slight stroke will serve to lay them dead; yet, certainly, that Christian, who, by experience, knows what it is to deal with his own heart, finds it infinitely more difficult to beat down one sinful thought from rising and tumultuating within, than it is to keep in many a sinful thought from breaking forth into act: so that here lies the very stress and hardship of mortification, in fighting against such shadows, such apparitions, such little entities as thoughts are.

Now there are these three things, that make this so very difficult.

(1) Because the first bubblings of these sinful emanations from the fountain and spring-head of corruption, *it is not in our power to hinder.*

External actions fall under deliberation, and they usually are sifted by censure, and guided by advice and counsel; and this gives us advantage, either to let them loose or to restrain them, at our pleasure: but who deliberates on thoughts, or consults about first motions? These first-born actings of the soul fall not under any previous considerations, to examine or forbid them; and, therefore, it is not in our power to make them good or evil, holy or sinful, but, according as the habit and principle within is, so they spontaneously start up; holy thoughts from a gracious principle, and sinful thoughts from a corrupt one. Nay, those things that are the best and most effectual means for mortification, yet cannot keep down sinful thoughts: they will swarm and buzz about the soul, in praying, in hearing, in the most holy and spiritual duties that we can perform; and, when we should be wholly taken up in communion with God, the whole duty, it may be, is necessarily spent in fraying these away; and, when we should be intensely and exaltedly spiritual, all that we can do is but to keep our hearts from being long together sinful. It fares with us, as it fared with Abraham when sacrificing: Gen. xv. 11; the text tells us, "when the fowls came down upon the carcasses" of the sacrifices,

that "Abram drove them away." These fowls are our sinful thoughts: they fly in the air, at random: we cannot hinder them from lighting; and, it may be, on our sacrifices too: all, that we can do, is to drive them away, that they may not devour, though they do and will pollute. The first rise of sinful thoughts, we cannot oppose; their continuance and abiding, we may: yea, we ought always to compose ourselves in such a frame, as that corruption may not occasionally be stirred in us; yet it is impossible, altogether to keep ourselves from the inward motions and workings of it.

(2) Sinful thoughts *lie unespied and undiscerned* by ourselves.

How often do they steal away the heart insensibly, and carry it very far unto sinful objects unawares! so that, when we look back to see the workings of our thoughts, we wonder many times how and where they crept in: we find them very busy, but when they got in, we know not; no, nor how long they have continued: unless we keep a strict guard and a narrow watch upon our hearts, these subtle and deceitful lusts will undermine us, and get within and possess us, ere we can take notice of them. This is the continual vexation of the best Christians, that, even in duties, a vain and impertinent thought runs away with their hearts; that the heat and warmth of their affections, the life, vigor, and spirituality of their souls in communion with God, are lost oftentimes ere they perceive it: they, at last, perhaps, find out this thieving, deceitful thought, and mourn over it; but yet know not when or how it entered; no, nor can track it so much as by any footsteps. This lurking, deceitful abode of an unperceived thought is, or may be, the sad and just complaint of every soul among us. The Apostle cries out of it, Rom. vii. 21; "When I would do good, evil is present with me:" it is present: here I find it: but how or when it rose, that I know not.

(3) It is very difficult *thoroughly to convince men* of the great guilt and evil, which there is in sinful thoughts.

And this also makes it so difficult to mortify them: because they are but things of a small and minute being, therefore men think they carry in them but small guilt and little danger. Every man, that hath but a remnant of conscience left in him, will beware of gross, black, and grisly sins, which carry the brand of hell and damnation visibly stamped upon their foreheads; such as he, who can without reluctance commit, must needs own himself for the apparent offspring of the devil: but for an invisible thought, a notion, an airy idea, a thing next nothing, this certainly can hurt

no one: "By a malicious thought, I injure no man: by a covetous thought, I neither grind nor extort from any man: and what so great evil then can there be in this?" It is true, indeed, wert thou only to deal with men, whom thy thoughts touch not, there were no such great evil in them: but, when thou hast to do with an immaterial and spiritual God, before whom thy thoughts appear as substantial and considerable as thy outward acts: then know, that a thought, as slight and thin a being as it is, is yet a heinous provocation of his majesty, a wretched violation of his law, and will be (if not mortified) a fearful damnation and destruction to thine own soul. This doth lie at the bottom of all that neglect, of which men are generally guilty in opposing sinful thoughts: they think them (which indeed is as bad a thought as any other) harmless and indifferent things. As we use to call little infants, innocent babes, though indeed they are born into the world with a hell of sin in their natures; some men are apt to think the sinful thoughts, which they conceive and with which they travail, to be innocent infant things, though indeed every one of them be no other than a firebrand of hell. Some thoughts we are wont to accuse and condemn, as being impertinent: the truth is, it is a name too slight and favorable: there is no such thing as an impertinent thought; no, there is not any thing in your whole lives of greater concernment, and weight, and moment than your thoughts: whatever they be, their influence reacheth no shorter than unto what an eternity of life or death extends to. Now, if this persuasion did indeed take hold of men, were it possible, that they should thus indulge themselves in vain, frothy, idle, nay let me call them sinful and pernicious thoughts; thoughts, so effectually destructive? Were it possible, that they should so closely brood on these cockatrice eggs, which bring forth nothing but serpents to sting them to eternal death? Were it possible, that they should roll and toss a sin to and fro in the fancy; and, thereby, recompense the devil and their own corruptions, for the squeamishness of conscience in hindering the commission of it? Surely, herein men betray great want of acquaintance with mortification, when not daring to commit certain sins, they yet dare with complacency and delight to contemplate and feed upon them in their own thoughts. Turn, therefore, your eyes inward: when the swarm of lusts is up, and much noise and buzzing is made by corruptions, by temptations, which yet some external principles will not suffer to break forth; where then do they flutter? Do they settle in the heart? Dost thou fire them there? Do thy thoughts, like so many intellectual

bees, fly abroad and suck sweetness out of every sinful object, to lay and hoard it up in the fancy? Canst thou, for the satisfying of conscience, restrain the outward actings of sin; and yet, for the satisfying of corruption, tolerate and allow the inward workings of it? Certain it is, thou never yet knewest what belongs to true and saving mortification; and it were happy for thee, if such an imaginary sinner might suffer only an imaginary death.

But a truly mortified Christian, as he is watchful to keep sin from breaking forth into outward act, so is he especially careful to resist and quell the sins of the inward man, the sins of the heart.

[1] Because he knows that these are the sins, which are most of all contrary to grace, and do most of all weaken and waste it.

Heart sins lie, as so many worms, eating and gnawing the very root of grace; when as outward sins, any otherwise than as they proceed from the heart, are but as caterpillars, that devour only the verdure and flourishing of grace. How can grace breathe or stir, in such a crowd of sinful thoughts and sinful affections, that oppress it? How can it grow and thrive, among such multitudes of weeds, that choke and starve it? There is no room for grace to live, at least not to act, till mortification pulls up and throws out of the heart all that trash which before filled it.

[2] He knows, likewise, that when the heart is brimful of corruption, the least jog of a temptation will make it run over. And, therefore,

[3] He looks upon it as the most easy and compendious way of mortification, to begin at the heart.

Thence it is, that all the outward sins of a man's life and conversation receive their supply. What saith Christ, Mat. xv. 19? "Out of the heart proceed evil thoughts, murders, adulteries, fornications, thefts, false witness, blasphemies?" Whence are the streams supplied, but from the fountain? And if this be dried up, those must of necessity fail. Those corrupt streams, that flow forth too apparently in men's actions, proceed all from that bitter fountain, which continually bubbles up in the heart; and, as the exercise of mortification dries up this fountain, so the floods of ungodliness must needs run low, by consequence. This, therefore, is very rationally the great and main care of a mortified man, to keep his heart clean from sinful thoughts, sinful desires, and sinful motions and affections. And therefore God calls upon Jerusalem. Jer. iv. 14: "O Jerusalem, wash thine heart from wickedness, that thou mayst be saved:" that is, mortify the sins of thy heart, that

thou mayst live. But what sins are these? It is intimated in the following words: "How long shall thy vain thoughts lodge within thee?" How long? Truly they are likely to lodge for ever within; and they are never like to lodge only within, where all endeavors of mortification are only external and outward. It is in vain to strive to keep sinful thoughts within, unless we endeavor also to destroy them within: they will else break forth, notwithstanding all the care that is used in restraint; and overrun the soul with the guilt of some scandalous, conscience-wounding sin, or other. In your strugglings, therefore, against sin, and in your endeavors to mortify it, look what it is that you chiefly resist: do you not content yourselves that you have beaten corruption from the outworks into the very fort; that, whereas before it sallied forth at pleasure, wasted and made havoc of your consciences, gashed and wounded your souls even to the very death, triumphed over you as conquered slaves and vassals, now it is pent up in a narrower room and compass? Do you not think it enough that you lay a close siege unto it by conviction, conscience, legal terrors; and, by these, so shut it up, that though it may stir and tumultuate within, yet it cannot easily break forth to your disturbance? Is not this restraint sufficient? But must you still pursue it even into the very heart; and, when it hath hid itself in a sinful thought, there stifle and kill it? This, indeed, is a sign for good, that this great work of mortification is not only begun by you, but also brought to some perfection. If I may be allowed so to express it, the very heart of sin lies in the sins of the heart: and, if we would indeed mortify it, it is there that we must both aim and strike.

2. A truly mortified man *is very careful and laborious in opposing and subduing spiritual sins and wickednesses.*

"Spiritual sins!" you will say, "why, are there any such? Graces may well be termed spiritual, being the immediate effects of the Holy Spirit of God; but are sins become spiritual too?"

By spiritual sins, therefore, I mean, such as principally reside in the more refined and exalted part of man, in the very flower and top of his being; called, therefore, by the Apostle, Eph. iv. 23; "the spirit of the mind;" the mind itself is a spiritual part, but here the Apostle makes this mind double refined, and extracts a spirit out of a spirit. So that those sins, which are chiefly conversant about the mind, the spirit of a man, and have but little commerce and fellowship with that dull dreggy part the body, these are spiritual sins: such are pride, envy, hypocrisy, unbelief, hardness

of heart, a slighting of the tenders of salvation made by Christ, a froward quenching of the good motions of the Holy Spirit.

These are spiritual sins; and these are the sins, against which a child of God bends his strongest endeavors in the work of mortification: and that, upon a threefold account.

(1) Because these spiritual sins, though they are not of that gross scandal and infamy among men, yet they are sins of the deepest and blackest guilt and defilement in themselves and in the sight of God.

And, therefore, when Christ would rake up the very bottom of hell, who lies there? Not the swearer, not the drunkard, not the unclean person, not the worldling, nor any such gross and brutish sinners; but the hypocrite, that spiritual, that refined and exalted sinner: Matt. xxiv. 51. Could we see impenitence, unbelief, hardness of heart, with the same eyes that God sees them, they would appear more ugly and deformed, than those foul and notorious wickednesses, which cause an indelible shame and reproach upon the places where such live as are guilty of them: and that, because they deface the choicest part of the image of God; that, wherein the soul doth nearest resemble and transcribe its original. This, a gracious heart, in part, discovers: it sees somewhat of the loathsome nature of these spiritual sins, which before it did not; and, therefore, now so earnestly opposeth them. And,

(2) Because these spiritual sins are the most dangerous and destructive of all others.

I do not say that the gross outward acts of sin do not deserve hell: they do; yea, and a scorching portion of it too. Yet, I say, if any, who hath been a sinner, though to a very high degree of scandal, doth eternally perish, it is not because of those outward sins merely, but because of impenitence, of unbelief, of hardness of heart, of slighting and undervaluing Jesus Christ, and refusing the gracious terms of the Gospel. They are only these spiritual sins, that do shut men out of heaven, and shut them up in hell, and seal them unto everlasting condemnation. Gross sins do this meritoriously; but these alone do it eventually: these do certainly effect it, as being sins against the only remedy appointed. And, then,

(3) Because they are sins, which, of all other, are most like unto the sins of the devil.

What are the sins of the devil? Not intemperance and luxury; those swinish and brutish lusts, wherein sensualists wallow: these

are not suited to the immaterial nature of the devil; and are so far below him, that he can neither act nor relish them. But intellectual sins, that are restrained and clarified from such grossness, as pride, malice, hatred of God and goodness, stoutness and stubbornness of heart against God; these are the sins, which this great and wretched spirit doth, with an implacable rage and spite, eternally commit: and, accordingly as wicked men are hellishly improved in their sins, so do they nearer resemble the devil. And therefore a child of God is, of all others, especially watchful over and industrious against these spiritual sins.

Now try yourselves by this. You rush not, possibly, into the same excess of riot with other men: you resist temptations, and beat down motions and inclinations to outward, gross, self-condemning sins. But did you ever see, did you ever strive against the pride, the hypocrisy, the unbelief and hardness of your hearts? Do you know what it is to maintain a war against these spiritual sins? Can you abhor and resist a temptation to slight Christ, or to grieve his Spirit, as well as to any outward scandalous sin? If so, this is a good sign, that you do indeed rightly exercise mortification. But, if you are only cleansed from the pollutions of the flesh, and not also from the pollutions of the spirit; if, while you war and strive against fleshly lusts, these spiritual and gospel sins are harbored and nestled in your hearts, know assuredly, that, whatsoever seeming victories and conquests you may obtain over them, yet they are not mortified.

v. Another mark for trial may be this: IF SIN BE MORTIFIED AND DEAD IN YOU, THEN YOU ALSO ARE MORTIFIED AND DEAD UNTO SIN.

“This,” you will say, “is very certain: but how shall we know whether we be dead to sin?”

In answer unto this, I shall give you these two particulars by which to try it.

1. *When there is little or no suitableness between sin and thy soul, then art thou dead unto it.*

Thou seest no beauty, no desirableness; thou tastest no sweetness, findest no delight in it: this is to be dead to it; and, accordingly as the degrees of this are, so art thou dying unto sin. When the appetite fails, and the stomach nauseates that food which before pleased it; this is a sign that the man is sick, and, it may be, dying: so, when that appetite, which before was greedy of sin, and swallowed it down as a sweet morsel, comes not only to leave it,

but to loathe it; this is a good sign that the man is sin-sick: sin is, in him, decaying and dying. I am crucified to the world, and the world to me, says the Apostle: Gal. vi. 14: so is a mortified Christian crucified unto sin, and sin to him. What delight or pleasure can any object bring to a crucified man? Truly, when the soul is once crucified unto sin, every sinful object is like that draught of gall and vinegar offered to Christ upon the cross: it hath nothing in it but sharpness and bitterness. Now try thyself by this: Is there no more agreeableness between sin and thy soul, than there is between a sick and dying man and the things of this life? Canst thou reject those temptations with indignation, which before thou closedst with with eagerness? Doth thy appetite, thy will and affection, loathe and nauseate those sins, which formerly thou swallowedst down with delight and greediness? This, indeed, is a sign that thou art mortified and dead to thy sins. But, if still thou findest as much sweetness and deliciousness in sin as ever, if thou hidest and rollest it under thy tongue as a sweet morsel, if it still be agreeable and most pleasing to thee, thou mayst indeed be dead; dead, not unto sin, but dead in sins and trespasses.

2. If thou art mortified and dead unto sin, *thou art then enlivened and quickened unto holiness.*

What saith the Apostle, Rom. vi. 11? "Reckon yourselves to be dead indeed unto sin; but alive unto God, through Jesus Christ." To be alive unto holiness, what is that? It is to be lively in holiness; to have the heart and affections quickened to it, to be carried out strongly and vigorously in it: this is to be alive. Certainly, a lumpish, dull, heavy professor, who can hardly make a shift to jog on in a form of religion, who performs every thing that belongs to holiness without life, and spirit, and vivacity, must be very much mortified: he is not yet dead to his sins, otherwise he would be more quick and lively in his graces. It is impossible, that any man can be thus twice dead! what! dead to sin, and yet dead to holiness too! no, the death of sin is the life of grace: and, therefore, where you find the one strong and active, you may conclude the other is weak and languishing.

Now if the old man be indeed crucified within you, these particulars of examination do, as it were, show you the print of the nails, and of the spear that wounded it; and they bid you thrust your hands into its side, that you may be more certain of its death, and in that certainty rejoice. It were happy for us, if, without self-flat-

tery, we could from these things draw an evidence of our mortification: but, it is to be feared, that they serve rather to show us what a strange thing it is in the world; yea, how much a stranger even in Israel. How few do at all resist the swing and career of corruption! of those that do, how few do it from a right principle, and by right means! If, perhaps, some few such there be (as certainly some such there are, though but a few) yet even their strugglings and wrestlings against corruption are so impertinent and trifling, that, did they not presume them to flow from an inward principle of grace, they could not but be ashamed either to think or call them mortification. The generality and common mass of the world do so securely live after the flesh, as if they were always to live in the flesh; or, as if they were already resolved rather to be cast into hell with their old man whole and entire, than to enter into heaven halt and maimed. Yea, the very best Christians do so live in the flesh, as being too well content that the flesh should also live, move, and act in them; they will not be so unhospitable as to destroy that inmate of corruption, though that lurk in them only to destroy them.

I shall not now lay motives and arguments before you, to press upon you this great duty: the text hath given us the most effectual and brief compendium: If ye mortify, ye shall live; if not, ye shall die. Life and death are this day set before you; and what could be spoken so much, in so little? Certainly, that man may conclude himself to be already dead, whom the consideration of life and death doth not move nor persuade. "The fleshly liver, he shall die?" Is that all? Do we not see the most mortified Christians die too? Doth not the original curse take hold of them both, and tumble them alike into the dust? Would not wicked men be content, would they not wish, after they have been sated and glutted with sinning, to die away, and to lie forever in a forgotten darkness? What then is there in this dying, that should be of such force unto mortification? "The mortified Christian, he shall live." Is that all? What! to live still mortifying, still contending and fighting against his corruptions, still sighing and groaning under them in the anguish and bitterness of his soul! is there any such encouraging promise in this, that he shall still live struggling and combating against that, which makes him weary of his life, and even to long and pant after death? Are these such prevailing motives to mortification? "No: the sensualist shall die; but he shall die a never-dying life of death. The mortified person shall

live; but he shall live a life, wherein there shall be no more need of mortification, because no more remainders of corruption." Then all tears shall be wiped out of our eyes, and all sins wiped out of our hearts. Now is the time of our warfare, and every battle that we fight is with confused noise, and garments rolled in blood: then shall we forever triumph, and sing an eternal song of victory, clothed in garments made white with the blood of the Lamb. Now we are at a perpetual discord with ourselves; thoughts bandying against thoughts; affections against affections; will against will; and all within us in an uproar and tumult: but then an eternal peace and calm shall fill our souls: not a thought shall whisper a rebellion: the whole tide and current of our wills and affections, with a full and undisturbed stream, shall run into that boundless ocean of all felicity, even God himself. But I must, though reluctantly, leave the prosecution of this argument.

VII. And now, let me suppose that the great question you would all ask is, what you should do to mortify corruption, and how you should strive against it so as to obtain conquest and victory over it. For DIRECTION, therefore, in this great work, let me propound unto you these following RULES, each of which, if rightly wielded, is enough to pierce into the very bowels of corruption.

i. Labor, to get A FULL AND CLEAR SIGHT AND DISCOVERY OF THAT SIN ESPECIALLY, WHICH IS MOST PERPLEXING AND MOST UNMORTIFIED.

He, that would subdue his enemy, must first find him out, and consider where his strength lies, what advantages he hath got against him, the manner of his warring, and accordingly prepare for resistance. This must be the policy of every Christian: he must keep spies and good intelligence in his enemy's camp.

Two things he must especially know, if he would subdue his lusts.

Wherein their great strength lies, and what advantages they have against him.

He must always consider the ground and cause of the quarrel: as, the guilt, which it would bring upon him; and, the danger, which it would bring him into, if committed.

This will serve to kindle a holy anger and indignation against sin, without which this great work of mortification can never go on prosperously.

1. I say, seriously consider *wherein the strength and prevalency*

of thy corruption lies, from whence it hath its greatest advantage against thee.

This will show thee how thou shouldst particularly apply thyself to the mortification of it. If it hath more than ordinary strength and power in thee, thy endeavors to mortify it must also be more than ordinary. If you ask, "What are those advantages, that do give so great a prevalence unto a corruption?" I answer,

(1) Habit and frequent relapses into the same sins: especially if they have been against strong convictions, against binding vows and promises, and manifold dealings of God both in judgment and in mercy.

Though I am far from that desperate, Rabbinical conceit of the Jews, who hold the fourth relapse into the same sin unpardonable; grounding themselves upon Amos i., where God threatens Damascus, Edom, and Ammon, that "for three transgressions, and for four," he would not turn away their punishment; yet, certainly, if a particular lust, be it what it will, pride, malice, uncleanness, or covetousness, breaks forth frequently into act, forces all thy guards, bears down all considerations that stand in the way to oppose it; I will not say thy case is desperate, but yet it is very dangerous, and a sad symptom of a stubborn unruly lust that will not be mortified without extraordinary pains and care. Dost thou find any such old, cankering distemper within thee, ripened by long continuance and habituated by custom, that hath often choked conscience, stifled convictions, out-stood many dispensations of God? Know that the very age and grey hairs of such a lust claim a command and authority over the soul, and that it is a task next to an impossibility to subdue it. Jer. xiii. 23: "Can the Ethiopian change his skin, or the leopard his spots? then may ye also do good, that are accustomed to do evil." It is very hard to dislodge a lust, that pleads prescription for itself: it hath had possession of the heart, time out of mind: (Can you ever remember when it had not?) and therefore struggles as for its lawful right, and will not be ejected. And this is by so much the more dangerous, if it breaks out to the defiling and wounding of conscience, after deep humiliation, bitter repentance, serious resolutions, temporary reformation: if it prevail against all these, what is there in the soul that can resist it? Every spiritual distemper is dangerous, but relapses are commonly mortal and deadly: and are too clear evidences, that, when the soul was at its best estate, its wound was healed but slightly, only skinned over; while the core of cor-

ruption lay deep within, rankling and festering till it brake out more incurably.

If this be the case and condition of any here, it is possible, that as yet grace may be still in you; but it is impossible, that it should there remain, unless you use extraordinary diligence for the quelling and subduing of this unruly lust, that hath so often broken loose.

Now, to help you in this, as indeed all helps against a corruption so deeply rooted are too few, consider these following particulars.

[1] Think with yourselves, if your natures be changed, your customs also must be changed.

It is a most loathsome and monstrous mixture, to have a new nature and yet old sins. Every principle will act suitably to itself. If grace be indeed in you, it will not lie sluggish and dormant: no, it is an active, vigorous, and ethereal being: it will certainly change the course and custom of your lives: it will make strange innovations; antiquating old customs, and bringing in new. Now urge this against a customary corruption: "How can I think my nature is changed, if still my life and actions be the same? I am not now the man I was; and it is most irrational, that I, regenerate, that I, sanctified and renewed, should observe the customs and usages of myself unregenerate, carnal, and profane."

[2] Consider, that customary and ordinary sins will call for, either extraordinary wrath, or at least more than customary repentance.

Certainly, redoubled sins will be punished with more than a single hell. If they be pardoned, it will cost many a shower of repentant tears. Peter's thrice denial of his Master makes him weep bitterly.

[3] Customary sins carry in them a high contempt against God himself.

To sin through surprisal, inadvertence, or infirmity, is incident to all men; but, to sin the same sin frequently, to make a custom of it, must needs argue that such an one slights and despises God himself: he would else fear to provoke him the second time, by the same sin. And,

[4] Consider, custom in sinning is the ready way to final hardness and impenitence.

It is this, that turns the heart to iron, and the brow to brass; makes men resolved to sin, and impudent in sinning. It is this that hoodwinks the understanding, blunts the edge of the sharpest

convictions, sears the conscience, and brings a thick insensibility upon that tender faculty. This makes the grossest and vilest wickedness familiar to the soul; so that, many times, sins of the most horrid and blackest guilt are rushed into without either fear or regard. And,

[5] Custom in sin will grow to a nature of sinning, if not timely prevented by a severe mortification.

It will so insinuate into the affections, and wind and twist itself about every faculty of the soul, that what at first was but use, will in process become nature. You see, then, what a great necessity there is mightily to labor and strive against these customary sins, which are as a twisted cord very hardly broken. If a corruption hath once settled into a custom, it is not an ordinary endeavor that can then remove it.

(2) As a habitual, so a peculiar sin requires a peculiar mortification.

It is in vain to use common and ordinary attempts against a proper sin. And therefore David doth exult and glory in this as a great achievement; Ps. xviii. 23: "I kept myself from mine iniquity:" *mine iniquity*; not *mine* by election or approbation, as one picked out from the rest to reserve for himself; no, but *mine* by a too constant and violent bent and inclination of my corrupt heart.

[1] Now, certain it is, that every one hath his peculiar sin: a sin, that he may truly call his own, that is fast riveted and deeply rooted; yea, more deeply rooted in his soul, than others are. I shall not now inquire whether these proper and peculiar sins arise, either from the temperament of the body, or from a man's education, or from his profession and calling: whencesoever they proceed, if we would go on vigorously in the work of mortification, these are the sins which we must especially single out and deal with.

"Yea, but," you will say, "how shall I know which is my peculiar sin, that so I may set myself against it to mortify it?"

To this I answer: Were it as easy to subdue it, as it is to discover it, a great part of the difficulty of Christianity would soon be at an end. It is a sin, which cannot long lie hid: it will betray itself, if not to the observation of others, yet at least to the observation of a man's own conscience. If conscience should ask you one by one, "What is thine, and thine, and thine iniquity?" every one would silently whisper to himself, "Oh! pride is mine:" "Hypocrisy is mine:" "Covetousness and worldliness is mine:"

"Uncleanness is mine:" and who among us is there that could not give an answer?

Yet, for farther satisfaction, take these particulars.

1st. That sin, which doth most of all employ and busy thy thoughts, that is thy most unmortified and peculiar sin.

Thoughts are purveyors for lust, which range abroad and bring in provision for it. Observe upon what objects they pitch: mark how they work. Do thy thoughts lie continually sucking at the breasts of pleasure? Are they still drenched and bathed in carnal delights? Voluptuousness is thy peculiar sin. Do thy thoughts continually delve and dig in the earth, and return to thee laden only with thick clay? Covetousness is thy peculiar sin. Do they soar and tower up to honors, dignities, preferments; and still fill thee with designs and forecasts how to raise thyself to them? Pride and ambition are thy sins. And so, of the rest.

2dly. The unmortified and peculiar sin is always most impatient of contradiction and opposition.

(1st) It cannot bear a reproof from others.

Let never so much be thundered against other sins, this makes no stir nor tumult: but, if the reproof fall upon his sin, you then touch the very apple of his eye; you then search him to the very quick: and this will cause some commotion and disturbance within. Hence it is, that many, who come to the word of God, sit very quiet under many a reproof and many a threatening, because they think these all fall beside them: but, if the bow drawn at a venture wound them under the fifth rib, if it strike their peculiar sin, oh! what mustering up of carnal reasonings and carnal evasions is there to shift it off? All this stir and bustle doth but plainly show where the sore is. That is a galled conscience which will not endure to be wrung by a reproof. And,

(2dly) As it cannot bear a reproof; so it cannot brook a denial, when it tempts and solicits.

Of all lusts, this tempts oftenest and most eagerly. Other corruptions are modest, compared to this; and will often desist, upon a peremptory denial: but this peculiar sin grows wild and outrageous; it will have its course, or the soul shall have no quiet: so that conscience is never harder put to it, than to stand it out against the importunity of this sin.

3dly. That corruption, which every little occasion stirs up and sets on work with more than a proportionable violence, that is the most unmortified and peculiar sin.

By more than a proportionable violence, I mean, when the

object, temptation, or occasion is but slight and inconsiderable; and yet the lust, that is thereby moved, acts strongly and impetuously. And, therefore, the Apostle, Heb. xii. 1, calls it "the sin, which doth so easily beset us:" it stands always ready and prepared, upon the least hint of a temptation, to assault us. Now look what corruption it is, that doth most frequently interpose, that every little occasion stirs up and inflames to a greater height and rage than a strong temptation would another; be it passion, be it pride, or any other; this is the most unmortified and peculiar sin.

These may suffice, though others may be added, to discover what is our proper and peculiar sin; the lust, that is most natural and congenial to us.

Now since these sins have such a great advantage against us more than others have, they must therefore be more especially opposed than others. "This kind," to use our Saviour's words, "goeth not forth, but by prayer and fasting," and the most earnest endeavors of that soul, who is deeply afflicted with their power and prevalence: Matt. xvii. 21.

[2] I shall only here offer two or three considerations, that may possibly prove subservient to the mortifying of these peculiar sins.

1st. Consider: it is no excuse or extenuation of thy sin, nor do thou look upon it as such, that it is natural to thee; that it is the sin of thy temper, complexion, or profession: but, rather, account this a heinous aggravation, that makes thy sin out of measure sinful.

Some are so absurdly profane, as to make the naturalness of a sin an argument to lessen the guilt of it: they are naturally passionate and peevish, naturally high-minded and ambitious, naturally voluptuous and sensual; and they cannot help it: it is fixed and rooted in their temper and constitution of body; and, therefore, it is no wonder if it sometimes break forth in their lives, unless they could put off the outward man as well as the old man. Is this, thinkest thou, an excuse? Tell me, is not a toad therefore more loathsome and ugly, because its very nature and temper are venomous? And dost thou think it a good excuse for thy sins, that thou art naturally subject to them? Thou art therefore more loathsome in the sight of God, whose infinite holiness stands at as great an antipathy to a corrupt nature as to a sinful life. And, therefore, we find David, Ps. li. 5, aggravating his actual sins from this consideration, that he was "shapen in iniquity," and con-

ceived "in sin." Certainly original sin is no excuse, but rather an aggravation of actual; and the violent propensity of a man's nature to one sin more than another, is but an especial expression of original corruption.

2dly. Avoid, especially, those occasions, that have an especial tendency in them to draw forth thy peculiar lust.

This, as it must be observed in the mortification of every sin, so must it be most carefully heeded in thy dealing against thy proper sin; because it will take advantage from every slight and trivial occasion to break forth and show itself in act: it watcheth all opportunities; and a very little spark will suffice to kindle this tinder. Thou complainest that thou canst not subdue such a corruption: it will rise and tumultuate in thee: it will still break from thee. Canst thou ever expect it will be otherwise, while thou heedlessly exposest thyself to so many occasions, on which thy corruption will take hold? Oh! how easy and comfortable might Christians make this great work of mortification, if they would be watchful! Corruption would not stir; or if it did, might soon be quelled, did not you yourselves entice it out by giving it such fair opportunities to exert itself. What saith the wise man, Prov. vi. 27? "Can a man take fire in his bosom, and his clothes not be burnt?" No; it is impossible: yet, truly, it is as possible for a man, that carries the prepared fuel of corruption in his heart, not to have it kindled and inflamed by his venturous running into occasions of sinning. You do but hereby provoke and dare corruption, which alas! is too apt to stir of itself. Certainly, he, who will venture on a near occasion of sinning, will venture on the sin itself; and, if he be all his days vexed and perplexed by it, it is the fault of his own carelessness.

3dly. Consider this: that proper and peculiar sins do deserve and call for proper and peculiar punishments.

Why shouldst thou think, while any unmortified lust is thine own, that the punishment of it should not be thine own also? Is it reason, that the sin should be peculiarly thine, and yet the punishment of it Christ's? No; Christ never came into the world to take off the guilt of that sin by justification, from which he doth not in some measure take off the bent and propensity of the heart by sanctification. And,

4thly. Consider: if you are saints, you yourselves are not your own: and shall any sin then be your peculiar sin?

1 Cor. vi. 19, 20; "Ye are not your own: but ye are bought with a price: therefore glorify God in your bodies, and in your

spirits, which are God's." And shall we ourselves be God's, and yet any sin be ours? What is this less, than, by a kind of practical blasphemy, to make our sins God's also? Such like considerations as these, should be continually present with us, when we go forth against our proper sins. It is not ordinary endeavors, that will suffice to mortify these: they are so rooted in and interwoven with the very principles of our nature, that they are the very last sins, which will quit their hold; and that, not without much difficulty and hardship.

Thus I have done with the first branch of this direction: To take notice of those sins, which have the greatest advantage and prevalence against us, which are customary and peculiar sins: and I have given you some particulars, to help you in the mortifying of them.

2. The other branch of this direction is, *to be continually pondering and weighing the ground and cause of the quarrel.*

This will exceedingly animate your utmost endeavors unto mortification. It is the cause, which inspirits soldiers: tells them, that they are to fight for estates, liberties, and lives; that whatever is dear to them is laid at stake, and pawned upon their valor; this will sharpen their courage, yea and their swords too, and make every stroke laid on by such considerations fatal as death. What can be more effectually pressed upon the spiritual soldier, to heighten and inflame his courage? Tell him but the cause he engageth for, and he must be either very much a coward, or else very treacherous against his own soul, that doth not resolve to stand it out to the utmost. It is for an everlasting kingdom, a crown of glory, a precious and immortal soul; for eternal life, for God himself, you are to fight: and will you sit still, and see all these lost and taken from you? There is not a corruption or temptation that assaults you, but seeks to deprive you of heaven and happiness, and would spill the dearest blood of your souls. A Christian's all, his nearest soul, his dearest God, the rich and inconceivable glory promised him, the few precious graces bestowed on him to bear his charges till he hath attained it, are all here staked down: this is the prize you are to contend for: if you can suffer all these to be taken from you, and think them not worth the striving for, you are beyond the reach of a provocation. Let the devil and your own lusts come armed against you, with all the strength and rage of hell; yet, if you can but then keep up lively and distinct considerations of the vast and important concerns which depend upon the issue of the conflict, it is impossible that they should ever

prevail upon you to the commission of any deliberate sin. Whenever, therefore, you are tempted, and find unmortified corruption very violent, think seriously with yourselves, what it is that you are solicited to do: is it not to provoke your God, to betray yourselves? Is it not, to defile, nay to destroy your souls? "Now, sin and Satan are very earnest to have me run myself into perdition: fain they would persuade me to forfeit heaven, and plunge myself deep into hell: they entice, they impel, they swell and tumultuate; but, if I yield, what becomes of all my hopes, of my crown of happiness, and of my own soul? It is happiness, which is the quarrel: and shall that be less dear to me, than my destruction is to Satan? Hath he cause to be so active and violent for my ruin, and have I no cause to be industrious and vigilant for my salvation? Shall I sell away all the great and glorious things of eternity, at the cheap and low price of a momentary sin?" Do but actually ponder and weigh these considerations, when a corruption moves and acts in you; set them before you; say them to yourselves, and run them over in your thoughts; and let me be bold to say, sin, then, if you can.

(1) There are two considerations, especially, which will be of mighty influence to the suppression of a corruption while it is tempting and stirring, and are the most available helps to mortification of all other.

[1] A serious consideration of the great guilt, that sin will bring upon us.

It must be the very first work of that Christian, who will successfully attempt the work of mortification, to charge a prevailing lust home with the full guilt of it. I confess it is a ghastly sight, a spectacle full of dread and horror, to view sin in its proper colors: but it is far better for thee to look sin in the face, when it tempts; than for sin to stare thy conscience in the face when it terrifies.

Carry always about you those two glasses, both of the law and gospel, which may represent sin aright to you.

When a glossing, flattering temptation shows it fair and beautiful, look upon your sin: see whether it can hold up its face against the law, when the sovereignty, holiness, severity, and piercing power and energy of it come all in against it. "By the law is the knowledge of sin:" Rom. iii. 20. Awe thy conscience with the authority of God, stamped and imprinted upon his law. "Hath God, the Great Sovereign, forbidden this by a law, and shall not I strive against it? Not to fight against this sin, were to be found

a fighter against God." Provoke thyself against it, from the holiness of God, revealed in his law? "Shall I commit that, which, for its deformity and ugliness, a Holy God hath forbidden in a holy law?" The law hath in it, first: such a bright and clear light, that sin cannot escape the discovery of it: it will make every spot in the soul visible; and those sins, which, through those false lights that Satan sets up, appear comely and well featured, when the light of the law shines into the conscience will then appear but one great misshapen blot. And, secondly; it hath in it such an absolute command and authority, that sin cannot resist nor escape the power of it. It comes into the conscience in the name of God: and makes as great a trembling in the heart, when set home in the condemning power of it; as it did in the Israelites, when delivered in that dreadful pomp from Mount Sinai. Is this holy, close, searching, authoritative law to be broken, think you, at the will and pleasure of every temptation? Must we in every passion, with Moses, at every corrupt motion and sinful inclination, break these two tables in pieces? Nay, indeed, is it possible, that, while in a temptation you are applying the law, you should then break it? No, certainly that man is near to a most desperate hardness, who, while he is looking upon the holiness, authority, and divinity of the law, while he is letting in the convincing light of it to discover the guilt of sin unto him, while he is discharging the dreadful threatenings of it against his sin, yet can then commit it; I say, he is near unto a final, judicial hardness.

When you have now awhile contemplated the face of sin in the law, remove it to the gospel. If the law break the heart with terror, the gospel will melt it with love. "What! to sin not only against the authority of a God, but also against the love of a father; that parent love, from which proceeds all the good I enjoy or expect; that pardoning love, justifying, adopting, and saving love! Can I spurn against those bowels, that yearn and roll towards me? Can I sin against that grace and mercy, which, should I sin against them, would yet still tender me a pardon? Can I be prodigal and lavishing of that blood, of which Christ was so free himself? Shall I despise it or trample it under foot, because it flows in so full a stream? Shall I quench and sadden the Holy Comforter; and return him grief, for all the ravishing consolations I have been filled with from him? Is this the filial disposition, the child-like ingenuousness of a son, of a saint?" These, oh Christian, are considerations, which must needs silence the most importune corruptions and temptations, that they shall have

nothing more to mutter. It is the gospel, by which alone the guilt of sin is taken away, that doth thus aggravate that guilt to such an excess, as proves a security from the committing of it. Tell me: did you ever know a temptation prevail over you, did you ever commit a sin in your whole lives, while such considerations as these were fresh and vigorous upon your hearts? Nay, I know it is impossible; the grace of God teacheth us otherwise; yea, it not only teacheth us, but enforceth and constraineth us otherwise. A temptation must first thrust these considerations out of the heart, ere it can prevail.

This, therefore, is the first means of beating down a corruption, by the consideration of its guilt, comparing it both with the law and the gospel. What better weapon can we have to fight with against corruption, than "the sword of the Spirit: which is the word of God:" Eph. vi. 17; and, in Heb. iv. 12, it is called a "two-edged sword:" the law is one edge, and the gospel another; and both these are powerful, sharp, and piercing, to the suppression and mortification of corruption, going to the very inwards and heart thereof.

[2] Another thing, that hath great influence to mortify sin, is, a serious consideration of the great danger, into which it will bring us.

1st. It were sad and dreadful, and enough to cause a trembling in us, if I should only mention unto you the danger of an enraged and distracted conscience, which God may let loose upon you in all its horrors and affrights, when you let loose yourselves unto the commission of any known sin.

2dly. The danger, if not of an enraged conscience, yet of a seared conscience, which is worse: the danger of a judicial curse and tradition, to be delivered up unto and sealed unto sin; that neither reproofs, nor convictions, nor judgments, nor mercies should ever more take hold, or make any impression upon you.

If I should name no more, were not here enough to stop the course of a prevailing lust? If yet you have any tenderness left in your hearts; any sense remaining in your consciences, together with their peace; would you rather hazard the loss of these, than not gratify a corruption? Say to it, "What sin is there, which can bring me in so much delight in the commission of it, as God may pour in terrors afterwards? May not God make my conscience a hell incarnate; and empty the vials of his wrath into this vessel, whilst it is yet an earthly vessel? And shall I ever let a hell break into my soul, by letting a lust break forth?"

Urge against a temptation that irrefragable argument, which all the methods and sophisms of the old serpent shall never be able to dissolve to all eternity: "If I yield, either my conscience will be sensible of the sin, or not: if it be sensible, what is there in the sin, that can recompense this trouble of conscience? if it be not sensible, what is there in this sin, that can recompense the stupidity and deadness of conscience?" Still, either way, the danger is so great, that the devil hath scarce impudence enough importunately to urge a temptation upon that soul, which shall urge this consideration upon itself.

3dly. But, besides these, there is another danger; and that, indeed, which swallows up all the rest: and that is the danger of eternal damnation. I have before showed you how such a legal consideration as this is, may be, and is a fit means for mortification. Now bring and marshal even this against your lusts. Think you, that a temptation can outface hell itself, and dare everlasting burnings? Can it stand before a torrent of fire and brimstone? No, certainly this is the hardness and obdurateness of those only, who feel hell's torments, not to be deterred from sin for fear of them. Now rise up mightily against thy lusts, even from this consideration: show them what they deserve, no less than damnation; from which, if any, who give way to them at any time, are rescued, it is only by the sovereign and unaccountable mercy of God. And, thus, while Satan casts fire, do thou cast firebrands. This is to make hell his second torture, that, as God makes use of it for his punishment, so do thou for his defeat and disappointment.

(2) For the right managing of this direction, for indeed much care and circumspection must here be had, take these following particulars.

[1] Take heed, lest, through any deceitfulness of thy heart, thou excuse and lessen thy sin, when thou shouldst be dealing against it by a vigorous mortification.

To take off any thing from your apprehensions of the guilt of sin, is to add to the power and strength of the temptation. And, therefore, take it for a sure rule, that that sin, in which thou dost not now see that black and horrid guilt which formerly thou hast done, hath more power over thee, and is more unmortified in thee, than ever formerly it was. It is the common method of Satan, in the height and fury of a temptation, to persuade the heart, either that it is no sin, or else a small and venial one. If this deceit prevail and take place, the work of mortification can never go on

vigorously. Certain it is, that, where the guilt of any sin is apprehended to be but small, there the endeavors against it will be but weak.

[2] Beware of weakening and enervating arguments drawn from the desert and danger of a prevailing lust, by relieving thyself with thoughts of the goodness and safety of thy spiritual condition.

This is a most desperate deceit of the heart, and a ready way to undo thousands of souls. When you have made head against a temptation, by arguments drawn from the wrath of God due to it, and that eternal vengeance which will follow, have you never found your corrupt hearts replying upon you, "Yea, but I am delivered from the wrath to come: I am ransomed from that vengeance: my spiritual and eternal state is secured by the immutable promise of God, and the immortal seed of grace; and, therefore, though I do commit this sin, yet my soul shall live?" This is the common fallacy of the devil, thus to make presumptuous applications of mercy, pardon, and free grace, to patronize the allowance of sin. If you thus argue, certain it is that you can never make good work of mortification. It is impossible to persuade that man from sin by the terrors of the Lord, who looks upon whatsoever is spoken of that kind, as not appertaining to him. And, therefore, consider,

1st. To encourage thyself in sin, upon hopes of thy being in a state of grace, is so rotten and unworthy a principle, as is scarce consistent with grace.

What is this, but to make use of grace against itself; against the God of grace; a mere turning of it into wantonness, and sinning that it might abound? which, of all things in the world, is the most opposite and repugnant to the truly noble and ingenuous nature of a gracious heart.

2dly. Consider: If thou shouldst be in a state of grace, and stand accepted with God, yet thou canst never know thyself so to be; nay, thou hast all the reason in the world to judge the contrary, if this consideration embolden thee to sin.

What though the perseverance of the saints unto glory be certain; yet, are they to persevere thereunto, whatsoever sins they commit? We find no such promise in the whole tenor of the covenant. It is, therefore, more unreasonable and absurd, to conclude from thy grace that thou mayst sin without danger; than to conclude, because thou makest use of such an encouragement to sin, therefore thou hast no grace.

3dly. Though thou knowest thyself, by the highest pitch of

assurance attainable, to be delivered from the wrath to come: yet still this wrath is the due desert of thy sin; yea, and will be the certain punishment of it, unless it be mortified in thee.

If ye, ye elect, ye sanctified and justified ones, "if ye live after the flesh, ye shall die." Rom. viii. 13. We may and ought, therefore, to denounce death and hell to the most assured saint, if he doth not mortify: for, though God hath decreed to save all his elect, yet he never decreed to save any of them but through mortification. The vanity of those men is, in these our days, sufficiently discovered, who would not have believers take notice, nor make application to themselves of any thing, that sounds threatening and terrible in the Scripture, as being unsuitable to their free and evangelical spirit. Let such know, that, in letting go such harsh and severe considerations, they lose a great advantage which they might have against their lusts. The holiest on earth, when God threatens sin, ought to tremble: and, whatsoever judgment they pass upon their persons, though they know themselves to be regenerate and elect; yet this is the judgment which they ought to pass upon their actions, that, if they be sinful, they are also damnable.

So that, whatever thy condition be, yet, whenever corruption tempts and troubles thee, oppose against its prevalence and seduction these affrighting considerations of wrath, hell, and vengeance. Thus follow and ply it: thus heap coals of fire upon its head: throw a hell between thee and thy lusts. This, if any thing, will stop thee. But, if thou canst frequently wade through unto it; if thou canst commit it, even while the thoughts of future wrath are hot and scorching, while everlasting burnings are flaming and flashing about thee; this argues a wretched obstinacy in sin, and is the sad symptom of a most dangerous, if not desperate condition.

ii. Another direction, in brief, shall be this: IF YOU WOULD EFFECTUALLY MORTIFY CORRUPTION, THEN ARM YOURSELVES AGAINST IT WITH STRONG RESOLUTIONS; WITH RESOLUTIONS, FREE FROM LIMITATIONS, FREE FROM ANY SECRET RESERVATIONS.

The Apostle hath given us many a tried piece of Christian armor, Eph. vi. 16, 17. There we have "the shield of faith, the sword of the Spirit, the breast-plate of righteousness, the helmet of salvation," and a complete panoply. But what are these, without resolution to use them? The shield may rust against the wall, and the sword in the sheath: grace may lie sluggish and inactive in the soul, while lust tempts, seduces and captivates, un-

less holy resolution rouse it, arm it, and lead it forth to the conflict. Wherefore is it, that so many complain that their lusts and corruptions are invincible? That they cannot stand before them? What is the reason, that they are so often ensnared and so often captivated, but because they do not put on the resolutions of men or Christians? They are not resolved to conquer: they do not fortify or steel their hearts with absolute or peremptory resolves, that, notwithstanding all the advantages any corruption hath gained against them, though it hath already frequently prevailed over them, though it daily and hourly tempt, entice, impel, yet they will beat it down and trample on it. Men are not thus firmly resolved, but waver and stagger in their purposes; and thereby give Satan hope and encouragement, while they thus fluctuate to assault and prevail over them. Were they once fully resolved, they would not yield; and Satan, who can do nothing against them without their own consent, would have but small encouragement to continue tempting: he would then say, "It is in vain, to lay siege to that soul: his resolutions have fortified him, and made him impregnable: not a fiery dart will stick, but rebounds back as from a rock of adamant, and makes no impressions: he is grown obstinate against my temptations, and will hearken to none of my suggestions: he will not stand so much as to consider what a temptation can say for itself, but peremptorily refuseth and rejecteth all: there is no hope left for me to prevail with such a soul." What David saith of his enemies, (Ps. cxviii. 10, 11,) "All nations compassed me about: but in the name of the Lord, will I destroy them;" the same must we say concerning our corruptions: though they beset us round and compass us about, though they swarm about us like bees; yet, in the name of the Lord, in the aid and assistance of the Holy Spirit, we will destroy them. You know what particular corruption it is, that doth most of all perplex and prevail over you: now take up fixed resolutions for the mortification of that sin: "Oh! nevermore will I give way to such a temptation: nevermore will I hearken to the flatteries and enticements of such a lust: nevermore shall this break my peace, wound my conscience, displease my God: now will I be revenged on it, and pour out the heart-blood of it before the Lord." Such absolute resolutions will be of great influence in the work of mortification. Yea, and though it may seem to be an old-fashioned antiquated prescript; yet would it prove itself to be of singular use and advantage, if we strengthened such resolutions against sin by laying upon ourselves some binding vows and engagements

against them : see how strongly David binds himself by an oath, Ps. cxix. 106 : "I have sworn, and I will perform it, that I will keep thy righteous judgments." David was resolved to keep the law of God ; but, lest that resolution should prove too weak, he strengthens it with an oath, "I have sworn, that I will keep them : " yea, and as if this oath were not security enough, he backs it with another resolution, "I have sworn and I will perform it." So do thou, against thy sins : resolve and vow against them : enforce one by the other : lift up thy hands unto God, that in the strength of Christ and by the aid of the Spirit, thou wilt never more yield to such a temptation, give way to such a corruption, commit such a sin. This, were it more practiced among Christians, would mightily provoke the great work of mortification.

"But," you will say, "what benefit can there be in this ? Alas ! my corruptions are so violent and outrageous, that they break through far greater engagements than my own resolutions are : neither law nor gospel can oppose them : they rush through commands, admonitions, threatenings, promises : and set all at nought : and shall I think, then, that such weak and insignificant things as purposes and resolutions are of any moment ?"

Be it so, that the rage of thy lusts hath broken through all those greater engagements, and hath borne down before it whatsoever either law or gospel should say to the contrary ; yet now bring against it thy purposes and resolutions. Though there may be, and is, an obligation of greater authority from other considerations ; yet nothing carries in it an obligation of greater efficacy than these do. There is that temper in every man's nature, that, though he struggle against an engagement which the authority of another imposeth on him ; yet he looks upon a voluntary engagement which he imposeth on himself, as most binding, sacred, and inviolable. Certainly, did you but thus bind yourselves, and in a serious manner call God to witness and assist your resolutions, you would find that those corruptions, which have broken through all other considerations, would have a stop put to them by this.

iii. Another direction is this : RESIST STRONGLY THE FIRST MOTIONS AND FIRST RISINGS OF THY CORRUPTIONS.

Crush them while they are in their infancy, before they get to a head, and gather strength against thee. It is folly to stay till thy enemies are grown up : no ; take the offspring and progeny of lust, while they are little ; and deal with them, as God threatens Babel, dash those "little ones against the stones."

1. Consider, *That there is not the least and most inconsiderable sinful motion, which riseth in thy soul, but it tends to the very utmost guilt, of which that kind of sin is capable.*

Thou art deceived, if thou thinkest it will still be a weak, faint, languishing conception: no; corruption will lay in provision for it and nourish it, till that, which was at first but as a grain of mustard seed, the smallest of all seeds, grow up and shoot forth great branches, that the prince of the air may lodge in them. Thou mayst easier set bounds to the flowing of the sea, and in a tempest command a wave in the midst of its swelling to stand fixed and not break, than to stop the course of a growing lust, and to say to it, "Hitherto only shalt thou come and no farther; so far as thoughts, so far as delight and complacency, but never so far as act:" it is impossible. The cloud, that at first was but a hand's breadth, soon grew into a general tempest. Truly, a lust, that at first seems no more, will, if not presently scattered, soon raise a storm and tempest in the soul: and what insurer will then secure him from making shipwreck of a good conscience? These small and beginning lusts, though they may seem harmless and innocent, yet, if let alone, will stop nowhere short of the highest pitch of wickedness, and the lowest place of hell: an irreverend thought of God, would stop nowhere short of professed atheism and flat denial of God: a hard thought against the people and the ways of God, would stop nowhere short of implacable hatred and bloody persecution: an envious, malicious thought, would run and seed up into murder. Ask these thoughts, therefore, whither it is they tend; what period, what issue they would have: would they not end in blasphemy, in atheism, in uncleanness, in oppression, in murder, in the foulest and most unnatural sins imaginable? Nay, there is no such little sinful thought, but that it would, if permitted, end in that unpardonable sin, the sin against the Holy Ghost. And, therefore, with the same indignation and abhorrence, that you would rise against explicit and downright temptations to these sins; with the very same indignation and abhorrence, rise also against the very first stirrings and motions of thy corruptions: look upon them, as if they would accomplish their very utmost effect, as if they were ready to bring upon thee all that guilt which they seminally contain in them. And this will be a good means to mortification.

2. Consider: *Thus to oppose the very first risings of corruption, will make the work of mortification more easy and delightful.*

It is hard and difficult to purge out the dregs of a corruption,

which hath lain long settling in the heart. It will, by continuance, wind itself into the affections, bribe and entangle them; and this will make the work, not only more difficult, but more irksome and grievous. The farther the stream runs from the fountain, the stronger, and the more rapid and irresistible is its course; so, truly, is it with lust: that, which at first was but the weak bubbling up of corruption, easily opposed and withstood, if it run along in the heart undisturbed, will swell to such a torrent, that nothing can stand against it. Every corruption hath a corroding malignity; and, though at first the wound appear but slight, yet, if neglected, it will bring the soul into the same sad condition that David was in, when he cried out: Ps. xxxviii. 5; "My wounds stink and are corrupt, because of my foolishness." Oh! it is indeed a foolishness that will cost us bitter repentance, to dandle sinful thoughts; to trifle and dally with sinful motions and sinful desires: though they are but the first breathings of corruption, the first sproutings and buddings-forth of the root of bitterness; though now we see no such great guilt nor danger in them: yet, when these shall have ulcerated the whole soul, and made it all over one running issue of corruption, we shall then sadly complain of our gross folly, in slighting the first workings and stirrings of it. As ever you would make good work, then, of mortification, watch carefully against these and suppress them: observe where a sinful thought, where a sinful desire, doth but begin to heave and lift in thy heart; and beat it down, while it is yet an embryo and an unshaped birth.

iv. Another direction shall be this: SET BEFORE YOU, AND CONTINUALLY KEEP ALIVE ALL THOSE CONSIDERATIONS, THAT MAY ENCOURAGE YOUR HEARTS AND STRENGTHEN YOUR HANDS, IN CARRYING ON THIS GREAT WORK.

Many such encouragements might be propounded. As,

1. *Always keep alive a sense of God's presence with you, that he eyes and beholds you.*

This apprehension, if continually kept up in its life and vigor, will have a mighty influence in the work of mortification.

(1) Consider, God eyes thee, to observe how thou managest thy great quarrel against corruption.

As soon as thou becamest a Christian, thou becamest a champion: thou enteredst into the list, and threwest out a bold challenge and defiance to all the powers of hell and the lusts of thine own heart. Not only men and angels, but God himself also looks on, to see how thou wilt make good the combat. And wilt thou not

strive and struggle to the utmost, when God himself is a spectator? Wilt thou not show thy skill, and thy courage, and thy resolution then? Nay, consider: God is not only a spectator, but is deeply concerned in the issue of the combat: his battles thou fightest, his cause thou maintainest; and, if thou art conquered and captured, he is dishonored as well as thou endangered: if thou art victorious, God the Father hath the glory of the efficacy of electing grace; Jesus Christ, the captain of our salvation, hath the glory of the efficacy of redeeming grace; and the Holy Spirit hath the glory of the efficacy of his sanctifying and strengthening grace; all which are, as it were, engaged and pledged upon thy mortification. Do but, therefore, think with yourselves, when a temptation assaults you, "Now God eyes me, to see how I will behave myself against this temptation: he eyes me, to crown me, if victorious: and shall I be any otherwise but victorious, while God looks on? Shall I suffer myself to be foiled in his sight, whose cause I now maintain? No; God himself shall now see, what himself hath given me power and ability to do." Did Christians thus consider the presence and eye of God with and upon them, they would go forth more resolutely unto the work of mortification.

(2) Consider, the eye of Jesus Christ is upon thee, not only to observe, but to relieve thee, and to pity thee: while thou wrestlest, not only against flesh and blood, but against principalities and powers here on earth, he in heaven pities thee; his compassions roll towards thee; he hath a fellow-feeling of thy miseries and infirmities.

It is a most comfortable place, Heb. iv. 15: "We have not a High Priest, which cannot be touched with the feeling of our infirmities; but was in all points tempted like as we are, yet without sin." And that other place, Heb. ii. 18: "In that he himself hath suffered, being tempted, he is able to succor them that are tempted." Oh, what abundant comfort may we draw from these two breasts of consolation. Alas! a poor Christian, whom corruption within disquiets, and temptations without buffet; who is so close beset, as to be at the very point of yielding; let him look upwards, and eye that Christ by faith, who eyes him with compassion. Thou thinkest thyself deserted, and left to break through the hosts of thy spiritual enemies as thou canst; none to own thee, none to stand by thee: yea, Jesus Christ stands by thee: he knows thy weakness: he sees the power of thy lusts: in all thy temptations, he is tempted: and he, who knows no corruption in himself, yet

feels the stirrings and the strong workings of corruption in the hearts of his; and he will succor and relieve them.

What an encouragement is this! Is there any soul, that would refuse to war against his corruptions under such a leader and captain, who gives not only a command to fight, but might to subdue; who not only looks on the agonies and conflicts of his, with compassion, but relieves and succors them with power?

2. Consider for your encouragement, *the certainty of success in the work of mortification.*

This consideration, if duly pondered, is of itself able to outface all difficulties. A Christian's victories have nothing of chance in them: it is not to be ascribed to the fortune of the day, when he prevails: success is chained to his endeavors; and, unless he betray his own soul, and will himself be vanquished, he cannot but conquer. And would you wish a greater advantage, than to have success at your pleasure? Victory itself was never yet listed under any but a Christian's command: other conquerors have found it very fickle and inconstant; but, herein is the Christian more than a conqueror, because always sure of conquest, if himself pleaseth. This, indeed, will cost much pains: it will make the heart pant, and the soul run down with sweat: success is certain, but not without your utmost struggles and earnest endeavors. Let not lazy Christians ever think they shall be more than conquerors, while they use only drowsy and yawning desires; and wish that such a lust were weakened, that such a corruption were mortified and subdued, but never rouse up their graces against them: it is no wonder that we see them so often foiled and taken captive. Believe it, certainty of success is not entailed upon those weak and effeminate wishes, that are so frequent in the mouths of many: "Oh, that I were freed from the power of such a lust! Oh, that such a temptation might never more assault me! Oh, that I might live as free from sin as the angels do in heaven!" Truly, these are but sleepy and gaping desires, neither strong enough to lift the old man up to the cross, nor sharp enough to pierce him to the heart: corruption, though it be thus cursed, will live long: if this were all you could do, truly God had called you forth to a very unequal combat, even to deliver you into the hands of your lusts. Hath he bestowed his grace and his Spirit upon you, for this? Was it only to make the triumph of your corruptions the more conspicuous, and your defeats the more shameful? Was it that you should sit still, and, by a wretched sloth, betray both yourselves and them? No, certainly: they were given you to conquer; and

there is no corruption but they would conquer, if you yourselves would. It doth ill become a Christian to whine and shrink at the sight of that numerous host of corruptions, which encamp against him: be but conscious of thy own strength; nay, rather of the strength of God engaged for thee. Dost thou not see more for thee, than against thee? There is not one of these, but thou mayst look upon as a dead lust, delivered into thy hand for the slaughter; and, if thou sufferest it to escape alive, God may say to thee, as Ahab to Benhadad, "Because thou hast let go out of thy hand" a lust that "I appointed to utter destruction, therefore thy life shall go for" the life of it, 1 Kings xx. 42. Corruption, then, is in your own power: it is delivered up to you, to be mortified: though it be in your hearts to tempt and trouble you, yet it is in your hands to slaughter it. Consider but three things.

(1) Corruption, be it never so strong and violent, cannot prevail over you, without first asking and waiting for the consent of your own wills.

All its victories are but precarious and beggarly achievements; gotten rather by insinuation, flattery, and importunity, than by clear force. It must solicit the affections, cheat the understanding, and ask leave of the will, ere it prevail. And, therefore, the Apostle saith, Rom. vi. 13, "Neither yield ye your members as instruments of unrighteousness unto sin;" implying, that if they do become instruments to sin, they are voluntarily yielded up unto it. Believe it, there is no force, nor violence offered you: you are not compelled to sin: all, that a temptation can do, is, to persuade you: it cannot constrain you to sin, whether you will or no. When corruption storms most and swells highest, when Satan assaults you most fiercely; yet, after all, you are free and at your own disposal, especially if sanctified; and there is no deliberate temptation unto sin, but you may resist it if you will: if you can but find in your hearts to deny a corruption, you do mortify that corruption. Now would you wish to deal with better enemies than these, that must ask us leave, before they can hurt us; that must entreat and petition us to be wounded, to be taken captive, to be abused by them? Truly such are our own lusts: as terrible and as dreadful as they seem to us, yet indeed they are the most contemptible, slight, impotent adversaries in the world, were we but true to our own souls. But it is this, that gives corruption all its power: you will sin: you will yield to temptations: you will betray your souls: and then you cry out of the power of lusts: "Oh! their irresistible violence! I cannot stand against them:

they will break in upon me: they will prevail: they will be obeyed, and I cannot help it." They will, and thou canst not help it! for shame, O Christian: if thou wilt, thou canst help it. Didst thou ever sin, but that thou wert willing to it? Though there may be some resistance and reluctance from grace; in respect of which the Apostle tells us, that he did what he would not do; yea, what he hated, (Rom. vii. 19,) yet there is also a voluntariness in every sin: thou yieldest thyself to it; and givest it leave to wound thy conscience, to ruin thy soul, and thou wilt have it so. This is the strength of corruption: men will be conquered and captivated by it. Never tell me your corruptions are such as you cannot subdue: there is no such corruption: the most prevailing, the most tumultuating may be mortified to you, if you yourselves will. In a temptation, therefore, always think of this: "Why should I yield? What reason is there? What excuse can I have? I am not yet necessitated: I am not compelled to sin: my provision is not yet all spent: my heart is impregnable, unless I desert or dismantle it. I may, if I will, still stand it out, and be certain of the conquest. Shall I willfully give up my soul, my darling, to the devourer? Shall I myself open these everlasting gates, at which Satan now knocks indeed, but which he cannot force? I can choose whether this temptation shall ever prevail: an absolute denial, a peremptory no, would now silence it." Certainly, did you but actually dwell upon this thought in a temptation, it would shame you from gratifying many a corruption that now you do.

(2) Consider the prevailing nature of grace.

It is from this, that your endeavors after mortification are accompanied with certainty of success. Grace is an immortal seed, that will certainly sprout up and flower into glory: it is a living fountain, that will certainly flow and bubble up into everlasting life: it is a ray of heavenly light, that will scatter and triumph over darkness, and wax brighter and brighter unto the perfect day. It is immortal, in a seed; victorious, in a spark; triumphant, in its dawning. It hath a kind of omnipotence in it. Phil. iv. 13: "I can do all things, through Christ who strengtheneth me;" strengtheneth me, by his prevailing grace. And no wonder, since it is a particle of the divine nature itself; 2 Pet. i. 4, that "ye might be partakers of the divine nature." It is an indelible flourish of the divine essence, which sets the gloss of the divine attributes upon the soul, and makes it of kin to God himself. Yea, take grace when it is at the weakest; when this dawn is clouded, when this spark is twinkling, when this seed

seems unspirited; yet, then, it is victorious and triumphant: "The weapons of our warfare are not carnal, but mighty through God:" 2 Cor. x. 4. What an overmatch is this for corruption, to set grace against sin! it is to set God against Satan, heaven against hell, spirit against flesh. Will you desire greater advantage than this? Can you wish for greater encouragement? Oh! how faint-hearted must they needs be, whom certainty of prevailing cannot animate to contend. Who would not fight that hath such odds? "Am I certain to prevail? Have I that principle in me, which will go forth conquering unto conquer? Will it assuredly crown my soul with victory, and shall I not bring it to the trial? Here is a corruption, which molests me: shall I suffer it to captivate me, while yet I have that divine auxiliary within, which, if brought forth, would certainly overcome it? Nay, I must detain this grace in unrighteousness, I must depress it, I must keep it under by violence, if I do not prevail by it. Nay, if I strive not against my lusts, I must strive against my graces: and, what! shall I take as much pains to commit a sin, as would serve to subdue it?" Oh Christians! it is the greatest shame in the world, for you to be overcome and worsted: you, who have such an active, victorious principle; a principle which you yourselves must much wrong and injure, if it doth not always conquer; a principle, which riseth with a natural and spontaneous force and impetus against corruption, and if but owned, if but cherished, nay if not resisted and opposed, will certainly subdue it. What shall we think, when we see such as you foiled, but that there is treachery within? You conspire against your own grace: you keep it under: you check and curb that, which would, with a sprightly and ethereal impulse, rush upon and beat down the strongest lusts that oppose it.

[3] Consider: the greatest strength and power of corruption is already destroyed, before you are put upon the mortification of it.

It hath already lost its reigning power in you, and now it retains only its molesting power: it hath already lost the power of a king, and now it only retains the power of a rebel: your old man is already crucified; it now wants nothing but piercing: it is, with Absalom, hung up; and wants nothing but to be thrust through. So tender is our God of us, that he will not venture us against corruption, while it is in its full strength: alas! while corruption is entire and unbroken, we are unable to grapple with it: he himself, therefore, crushes the head of this serpent, and breaks the teeth of this lion; and, when it is thus weakened, he calls upon us to destroy it. God might, if he had so pleased, at once have made

a full end of corruption; and, in our regeneration, as perfectly have freed us from it, as we shall be hereafter in heaven: no, but he would not so take the whole work out of our hands: we must exercise our courage, and our resolution against it; and, therefore, he so far weakened it, that it might not destroy us, though still it be left so strong and powerful as to molest and trouble us.

So that you see, in these three things, success is assured to your endeavors: you cannot say corruption is unmatched in its strength, irresistible in its violence, that we cannot stand before it; no, you shall certainly prevail and overcome it, if you will but encounter it: and what an encouragement is this!

3. Another encouraging consideration is this: *the longer thou continuest mortifying, the weaker will corruption grow, and the easier thou wilt find this great work to be.*

Would you be freed from the continual vexing importunity of corruption? It now haunts and dogs you? and clamors to be gratified in this and in that sin; and you can find no rest from it: beware how you go about to satisfy it; for, believe it, that doth but the more enrage it. Solomon's insatiableness are moderate, compared with this: it still cries "*give, give;*" and, the more you give it, the louder still and the more eagerly it cries. Have you not found, that, after yielding to this importunity, corruption hath been more fierce than ever before? It is an impudent craver, that knows neither bounds nor modesty. You may as well quench fire with oil, as satisfy corruption with sinning: no, if you would, in any measure, be free from this perpetual trouble, use it frowardly; deny, reject it: spurn this body of sin and death: this, at last, will discountenance and discourage it from tempting: it will, at last, leave following thee, as one inexorable. Trust the experience of the children of God, in this particular: they will tell thee, that such and such a prevailing lust, which did use perpetually to perplex and disquiet them, which they feared they should never master, yet, by often vexing, crossing, and contradicting it, they have at length tamed; it being brought under command, and made subject to grace: and that though, indeed, there would remain still some grudgings of the distemper; yet it hath been less frequent and less violent in its working. Conclude upon it, that thou also mayst attain unto this. Doth any imperious lust perplex and trouble thee? Believe it, through the daily exercise of mortification thou wilt so tire it out and spend it, that, though it may murmur and repine sometimes, and grudge that it is not satisfied;

yet it shall seldom prevail to disturb thy communion with God, and never so far prevail as to destroy thy peace and comfort.

3. Consider, that *there is, in the exercise of mortification, though it be so sharp and severe a duty, an inward secret satisfaction of soul, that doth more than recompense all the pains and difficulty.*

There is a hidden complacency, even in cutting off right hands, and plucking out right eyes. There is a double nature in every child of God; the divine nature, and the corrupt nature: and that, which is a torment to the one, is a pleasure to the other. The divine nature takes as much pleasure in mortifying a corruption, as the corrupt nature doth in gratifying it. I wonder, therefore, how rational Christians are to be deterred from the work of mortification, by the harshness and painfulness of the work. If you have no nature in you but corrupt, how are you Christians? If you have, think you it is not as painful and as harsh to your new nature, that you yield to a lust; as it is to your corrupt nature, that you oppose and mortify it? Yes, the new nature groans, and sighs, and mourns in secret, when you sin against it: but it leaps for joy, it springs and exults in the heart, when you disappoint a temptation, and prevail against corruptions: it smiles upon you, when you return red from the slaughter. I appeal to experience: tell me, have you not found more ravishing joy and pleasure in that still insinuating soft delight, that diffuses itself silently through the soul, while you have been vigorously struggling against your corruptions, than ever you found in yielding to them? Though the contest be troublesome, yet what a calm follows when grace obtains the victory; not a ruffle, not a wrinkle upon the face of the soul! Oh! how sweetly doth it then enjoy both itself and its God! it twines about him, closely embraceth him, clasps hands with him; and then follow those inexpressible mutual congratulations for the success: "Oh! my soul, enter thou into this joy." If lust prevail, the pleasure may blaze high; but it is impure, dreggy, mixed, and hath in it more of the sting than the honey, besides those many thousand stings it leaves behind in the conscience. Now baffle a corruption, by that very argument, that it doth chiefly make use of. What is that, which lust useth to plead, when it tempts? Is it not pleasure? This is its most taking bait: when, therefore, it tells thee thou shalt have so much pleasure in it, it will bring thee in such an overflowing measure of satisfaction and delight; then answer it; "I can have better satisfaction and more sincere delight, in mortifying it: that will bring me in pure, spiritual, clarified joy: and shall I forego this, for the muddy, impure, short

blaze of sinful pleasure?" Thus encourage thyself unto this great duty

5. Consider, for thy encouragement, that *this work of mortification is but for a short time; for a few stormy winter days, that will soon be blown over.*

Though it must be a constant work, while it lasts; yet it is not to last long. Death, at last, will come in for our relief. Look how the scorched traveler longs for a shade to rest in, so doth a truly mortified Christian long to repose himself in the shadow of death: there he shall lie free from the scorchings of temptations, and the heat and swelter of corruption. It will not, it cannot be long, ere it shall be sung over us, "Your warfare accomplished." Though now we are kicking against the prickles, yet we shall shortly be crowned with roses. Our comfort is, that not a corruption shall enter into heaven with us, there to tempt or molest us. And, therefore, we should not faint nor be weary: though our work be sharp, yet it is but short, and our rest is everlasting.

Now be continually arming and strengthening yourselves with such encouraging considerations as these. You will find them to be of very great moment and influence, in the carrying on of the work of mortification.

v. Another direction shall be this: IF YOU WOULD MORTIFY YOUR CORRUPTIONS, THEN LABOR TO IMPROVE THE DEATH OF CHRIST UNTO THE DEATH OF SIN.

There is virtue in the blood of Christ, to staunch the bloody issue of corruption: he was wounded and crucified for sin, and sin was wounded and crucified with him. And thus Christ doth, by a holy kind of revenge, repay his death upon the old man, that put him to death. And therefore says the Apostle, Rom. vi. 6: "Our old man is crucified with him, that the body of sin might be destroyed:" and, in the former verses, he speaks of being "baptized into the death of Christ, and of being planted together in the likeness of his death:" all which intimates the death of sin, to be inflicted by the death of Christ. Look, as Moses healed the bitterness of the waters of Marah, by casting a tree into them: so, truly, that bitter fountain of corruption, which always sends forth bitter streams, is healed by the tree of the cross. Make it, therefore, your daily exercise, to bring the cross of Christ into your hearts, to nail and fasten your lusts unto it; and you shall quickly find them languish and expire.

If you ask what influence the death of Christ hath in the death

of sin, I answer, it hath mighty influence, especially these two ways:

As it is the meritorious cause of mortification: and

As it is the moving cause thereto.

1. *The death and cross of Christ is the meritorious cause of mortification.*

Then was the death of sin procured and purchased. We should always have lived vassals and bond-slaves to our lusts, still subject to them and kept under by them, but that Christ by dying, hath redeemed us from their power, and hath laid in store for us that grace whereby we are enabled to resist and prevail. Believe it, there is not a victory, that you obtain, but it cost blood; not your own indeed, but the precious blood of Jesus Christ. What a privilege hath a Christian in this! He conflicts, and conquers, and triumphs at the expense of another's blood. There is not a temptation which you resist, nor a corruption which you subdue, but the grace, that enables you thereunto, is the purchase of your Saviour's death. By death, he destroyed him, that had the power of death. By faith, therefore, draw continual supplies from the death of Christ: tell him, how rebellious and headstrong thy corruptions are grown, what tumults and uproars they make in thy heart: tell him, it was one end and intent of his death, that they might be destroyed in thee. beg of him relief and strength against them: plead with him, that, since he hath procured the death of sin at so high and dear a rate as his own blood, he would not suffer it to live unmortified in thee. Christ, by his sufferings, hath procured grace sufficient to make us more than conquerors: now it is the skill and art of faith, to derive from this full treasury supplies for mortification.

2. *The death of Christ hath a mighty influence upon our mortification, as it is the moving cause unto it.*

Certainly, if you do but seriously reflect upon the death of Christ; and consider that all the pains, wrath, and curse which he then underwent, were to free you from your sins; it cannot but embitter your hearts against it: "What! shall I suffer sin in me, which would not suffer Christ to live in the world? Was he crucified for it, and shall not I be crucified unto it?" Oh! say concerning thy corruptions, "It was this and that base lust of mine, which killed my Saviour: it was this and that sin, which squeezed so much gall and wormwood into the bitter cup of his sufferings: I see them stained with his blood: they look guilty of his death: and shall I lodge in my heart the bloody murderers of my

Saviour? No; their blood certainly shall go for his." This consideration, had I time to press it upon you, would be of great moment unto the exercise of mortification.

Thus I have, at large, handled to you this great and important duty of mortification. It is not that, which concerns only some particular Christians: it is not that, which is to be exercised only at some particular and especial seasons: it is not that, which conduceth only to the ornament and flourish of a Christian? No; it is that, which is the very life and power of Christianity, without which, whatsoever profession you glitter in, and dazzle the eyes of the world with, it is but empty and hypocritical. If any of these truths have taken hold upon your consciences, beware how you shift them off, lest, with them, you together shift off eternal life, and judge yourselves unworthy of it. I know it is indeed a hard duty, and I have endeavored to arm you against that prejudice: but pray tell me, is it not more hard to perish? Is it not more hard to lie in hell forever? Though it be pleasing to flesh and blood to live in sin, and to give corruption scope to act unopposed and unresisted; oh! but think, will it be pleasing to flesh and blood to lie forever scorching in eternal burnings? Never flatter yourselves: you or your sins must die: "If ye live after the flesh, ye shall die." If, after all that hath been spoken, you will yet indulge your lusts, and yield to temptations, and give yourselves over to the swing of your corruptions; believe it these sermons will rise up and witness against you at the last day, and leave you without excuse. You have been told what the duty is; how necessary; the way and means how you should perform it: and oh, that these things might never be objected against you for your condemnation! Oh, that they might become effectual to promote that great work in you, till that promise be fulfilled to you in the text, "If ye mortify, ye shall live."

ALMIGHTY GOD, who madest thy blessed Son to be circumcised, and obedient to the law for man; grant us the true circumcision of the Spirit; that our hearts, and all our members, being mortified from all worldly and carnal lusts, we may in all things obey thy blessed will, through the same thy Son Jesus Christ our Lord.
Amen.

DEATH DISARMED OF ITS STING.

I.

OF PATIENCE UNDER AFFLICTIONS.

But let patience have her perfect work, that ye may be perfect and entire, wanting nothing. JAMES i. 4.

IF we consider the state and condition of those Jews, to whom the Apostle directs this epistle, we shall find, that, as they were a dispersed, so they were an afflicted and persecuted people. There was always a most implacable hatred, in other nations, against the Jews; accounting them the most base, perverse, and infamous people under heaven. And, doubtless, though the whole body of them, which lived in Judea, were well enough secured from their affronts and injuries; yet, such parcels of them as were scattered into other countries sadly felt the effects of this natural aversion and antipathy. Yea, so low and despicable was their condition that their own brethren, in scorn and contempt, call them "the dispersed among the Gentiles:" John vii. 35. Their ancient religion, which they had received from Moses, was so odious to the heathen, among whom they lived, that they accounted it the most ridiculous and sordid superstition that ever was invented: and, because they firmly adhered to a way of worship, which was so contradictory to that gross idolatry which had generally obtained in the world, they both derided them as credulous, and hated them as stubborn and inflexible. There is no hatred so bitter and irreconcilable, as that, which ariseth from different religions: for, religion being avowedly the highest concern of mankind, those who differ in this cannot but mutually accuse one another of folly and madness: and this begets mutual contempt, and ends in malice and violence; whilst each seeks to take the part of his God, and to vindicate his own wisdom in choosing him, against those, who must needs be concluded to despise, because they do not worship him. And, therefore, as these scattered Jews were hated and persecuted upon the account of their own native religion, so much more, when divers of them were converted to the faith of Christ; because they then took up and professed a religion, more contrary to the Gentile

impiety, than Judaism itself was. Yea, they were not only hated by the Gentiles, but by their own countrymen, the unbelieving Jews; who took all occasions to stir up the people against them, and to expose them, as the maintainers of a pestilent sect, to the fury of the enraged multitude: and we read frequently, in the Acts, what tumults, uproars, and persecutions, were raised against them by this means.

To these dispersed and distressed Christians, the Apostle directs this his epistle, and exhorts them, verse 2: "My brethren, count it all joy when ye fall into divers temptations:" that is, when ye fall into divers tribulations; for, by *temptations* here, he means not the inward assaults of the devil, but the outward assaults of his instruments. A strange command, one would think, to bid them rejoice at such a time, and in such circumstances as these! What! to rejoice when they were buffeted, reviled, spoiled, and murdered! appointed as sheep to the slaughter! enjoying their lives only at the courtesy of their enemy's malice! expecting hourly to be haled out, to suffer torments and death! Is this a proper occasion for joy? Is it not rather, for sorrow and dejection? No, saith the Apostle: although your trials be great and manifold, yet account it joy; yea, "count it all joy, when ye fall into these divers temptations:" verse 2.

But, certainly, so strange an exhortation as this, which seems so quite contrary to the inclinations of nature, had need be backed by some strong motive to enforce it. And that the Apostle gives them in the third verse: "Knowing this, that the trying of your faith worketh patience:" and, therefore, "count it all joy, when ye fall into divers temptations."

Now, in this are included two things, which should mightily further their joy.

First. That all their sufferings and afflictions are for the trial of their faith.

God, by these, tries whether your faith be well-grounded and saving, or whether it be only temporary and flitting; he tries, whether it be weak or strong; whether it be able to stay and support itself only upon a promise, or wants the crutches of sense and visible enjoyments to bear it up; whether it be a faith that is wrought in you only by conviction, or a faith that hath wrought in you a thorough conversion; whether it be a faith wrought in you only by evidence of the truth, or a faith that is accompanied with a sincere love of the truth. And, therefore, rejoice in your sufferings and afflictions; for these will help you to determine this

great and important question. If your faith be such as can overcome the world; if it can persuade you to esteem the reproach of Christ greater riches than the treasures of the world; if it respect more the promises of God than the threatenings of men, and future rewards more than present advantages; if it can bear both the anvil and the furnace: this is a faith, that is true and genuine; and, when it is thus tried, it shall "be found unto praise, and honor, and glory, at the appearing of Jesus Christ;" as the Apostle speaks, 1 Pet. i. 7. Such a faith as this, that can endure the fire and lose nothing of its weight and substance, is truly precious; more precious than gold that perisheth: such a faith, that can bring you to die for Christ, will certainly bring you to live with Christ. And, have you not great cause, then, to rejoice in afflictions, which afford you a means to know, whether your graces be genuine or spurious? Whether they be such as will bear his judgment and trial hereafter, by bearing afflictions and chastisements here? Certainly, that Christian hath great reason to suspect himself, who cannot rejoice that he is going to heaven, though God sends a fiery chariot to fetch him.

Secondly. This trial of their faith worketh patience.

The more a Christian bears, the more he is enabled to bear: his nerves and his sinews knit and grow strong under his burdens. And, therefore also, "count it all joy, when ye fall into divers temptations." For patience is, of itself, such a Christian excellence and perfection, that all trials and afflictions, which tend to increase this, are to be reckoned by us as gain and advantage. If thy sorrows and troubles add any degree of fortitude to thy patience, thou hast far more reason to rejoice, than to repine: for nothing in this present life is to be accounted good or evil, but only as it respects the advantage or disadvantage which our graces receive by it. Now, if God confirm and augment thy patience under sufferings, sufferings are mercies, afflictions are favors: he blesseth thee by chastisements; and crowneth thee with glory, even while he seems to crown thee with thorns. And wilt thou not triumph at this, oh, Christian! especially, considering the end of thy patience, which is hope, peace, and eternal life? See that excellent place to this purpose, Rom. v. 3, 4, 5: "We glory in tribulations: knowing that tribulation worketh patience; and patience, experience; and experience, hope; and hope maketh not ashamed." Here is true cause of glory, indeed; when our patience shall cause us to ascend through these degrees, to the top and perfection of all Christian attainments.

And from this, we may observe, by the way, that it is far better to have patience under afflictions, than to be freed from them: it is more cause of joy, to suffer the hand and will of God patiently, than not to suffer at all.

But, having spoken such great things concerning patience, the Apostle comes, in the text, to caution us about it: and tells us what qualifications it must have, to make even our afflictions the matter of our joy and comfort. "Let patience have her perfect work;" and then you shall have cause to rejoice. Let her go on to finish and accomplish what is begun and undertaken; and then shall ye "be perfect and entire, wanting nothing." It is not enough, oh Christians! that ye can bear some afflictions, and that only for some time: but, if you will be perfect, as you must do the whole will of God, and that with constancy and perseverance unto the end; so you must suffer the whole will of God, and put no earlier period to your patience than to your obedience: and to neither, till God shall be pleased to put a full period to your lives. Patience ought not to prescribe, either to the kind, measure, or degree of our sufferings. Say not, therefore, "I could easily bear such or such an affliction: but this, which I now lie under, is altogether intolerable:" or "I could cheerfully bear it, if I could see any issue out of it: but this is endless, and remediless." Believe it; this is but an imperfect patience, and will never perfect you in grace and glory. A perfect patience stoops to the heaviest burdens; and carries them as long as God shall please, without murmuring or repining: and, if that be to the grave, it knows that what is now a load, shall then be found to be a treasure. A Christian doth but carry his own wealth, his crown, and his scepter; which, though here they be burdensome, shall hereafter be eternally glorious.

From the words, we may observe these two propositions:

First. That a Christian's patience ought to finish and accomplish all the work that is proper for it, while he lies under troubles and afflictions: "Let patience have her perfect work."

Secondly. That the perfection of patience is the perfection of a Christian: "That ye may be perfect and entire, wanting nothing."

In the discussion of the first proposition, I shall observe the following method: I. Show what patience is. II. What is the proper work of patience. III. When patience has its perfect work. IV. The application of the whole subject.

I. WHAT IS this PATIENCE which a Christian ought to exercise and to accomplish, when he is under sufferings?

You may take this description of it.

It is a grace of God's Spirit, wrought in the heart of a true Christian, whereby he is sweetly inclined, quietly and willingly to submit to whatsoever the Lord shall think fit to lay upon him; calming all the passions, which are apt to rise up in him against God's dispensations, with the consideration and acknowledgment of his infinite sovereignty, wisdom, justice, and mercy, in those afflictions and chastisements which he is pleased to bring upon him. This, in the general, is this excellent grace of patience, which so much tends to the perfection and completing of a Christian. Now, a little more to explain this, I shall lay down some particulars both negative and positive, in which may be more fully seen what this grace of patience is.

i. NEGATIVELY.

1. *Patience is not a stoical apathy, or a senseless stupidity, under the hand of God.*

It is no narcotic virtue, to stupefy us, and take away the sense and feeling of afflictions. If it had any such opiate quality in it, it were not commendable nor praiseworthy: for that is no suffering, which is not felt; and if patience were only to deprive a man of the feeling of his sorrows and sufferings, it would only destroy its own object, and so cease to be any longer patience. And therefore, those, who are stupefied and insensible under the hand of God, and who take no notice of his judgments when his hand is stretched out against them, are no more to be accounted patient, than a block is, when it is hewn and cut: or, than the drunkard, of whom the wise man speaks; who, when he was stricken, was not sick; when he was beaten, felt it not. Nay, patience is so far from taking away the sense of sufferings, that it rather quickens it: there is no man, that more feels an affliction, than a Christian doth; for he refers his chastisements to his deserts: he looks inwardly, and sees his own guilt and sin, as that, which provokes God to afflict him; and this adds a great deal of gall and wormwood to the bitter cup, and makes every affliction to touch his soul and his conscience, as well as his outward man: he cannot but with grief of heart consider, that ever he should incense his Heavenly Father to use such severe discipline towards him. But a wicked man looks only upon what he suffers: he makes no reflections upon his demerits; and troubles himself no farther than

God is pleased to force trouble upon him: and so he bears it, cursing his ill fate; but never complaining of his sins, that provoked the just God so to punish him.

2. *Patience doth not stifle all modest complaints and moderate sorrow.*

A patient Christian may be well allowed this vent at which his grief may find relief. Grace never destroys but only regulates and corrects nature. It will permit thee to shed tears, so long as they run clear, and the course of them doth not stir up the mud of thy sinful passions and violent affections. It will permit thee to complain of what thou sufferest, so long as it keeps thee from complaining of that God, from whom thou sufferest. Thou mayst lawfully, without any wrong done to patience, express thy grief in all the outward and natural signs of it; only beware, lest this agitation make it exceed its due bounds and measures. We find that holy Job, who is commended to us as the mirror and great example of patience, when he had received the sad messages of the loss of his estate and of his children, "rent his mantle, and fell down upon the ground;" Job i. 20; and, that we might not think this a piece of his impatience, it is added, v. 22: "In all this, Job sinned not, nor charged God foolishly." The primitive disciples are said to make "great lamentation" over Stephen; though by his death and martyrdom he highly glorified God: Acts viii. 2. Patience chiefly consists in a due tranquility and composure of the mind: and those may be very impatient persons, and fret and estuate within, who yet may express but little emotion in their outward demeanor: like those latent and lurking fevers, that prey upon the spirits, when there appears but little intemperate heat in the outward limbs. And, again, a patient Christian may make use of all the doleful signs of sorrow, which God hath allowed, and which nature exacts; and yet his spirit not be moved beyond its due temper and consistency: like a tree, whose boughs are agitated by every gust and storm of wind, when yet the root remains fixed and unmoved in the earth. "It is not grief," says Chrysostom, "but the *excess* of grief, which I disallow. To grieve is natural, but to sorrow immoderately betokens effeminacy, infatuation, and even insanity."

3. *Patience doth not oblige us to continue under afflictions, when we may lawfully and warrantably free and release ourselves from them.*

It doth not require us to court or solicit troubles. It is a sign of a vitiated and corrupted palate, if our phisic taste not somewhat nauseous and displeasing to us; and of an obstinate and incor-

rigible mind, if we be not careful to shun the discipline of the rod. When God lays sore and heavy afflictions upon us, we are bound, upon principles of self-preservation, to endeavor, what we may, to free ourselves from them; otherwise, we sin against nature, and the God of nature. Therefore, if God reduce thee to poverty, by some stroke depriving thee of thy estate, it is not patience, but a lax and sinful carelessness, to sit still with thy hand in thy bosom, neglecting all honest industry to procure a comfortable subsistence, pretending that thou art willing to submit to the will and dispensations of God. If God bring sore, and perhaps mortal diseases upon thee, it is not patience, but presumption and impiety, to refuse the means which are proper for thy recovery, under pretence that thou art willing to bear whatsoever it pleaseth God to lay upon thee. And, generally, whatsoever calamity thou liest under, it is not patience, but obstinacy and contempt, to refuse deliverance, when thou mayst obtain it, without violating thy duty or God's honor.

4. *Much less doth patience oblige us to invite sufferings.*

It is fortitude enough, if we manfully stand their shock, when they assault us; but it is temerity, to provoke and challenge them. This is but like the frenzy of the Circumcellions: a sect of mad Christians in Africa, about St. Austin's time; who were so fond of martyrdom, that they would, with extremities, compel others to kill them; or, for want of executioners, dispatch themselves: that they might have the renown of resolution and patience. Neither is it patience to bear those invented severities, which blind devotionists inflict upon themselves: they may soon enough lash themselves into pain, but never into patience: this is a virtue, which thongs and whipcord can never teach them: nor is it at all thank-worthy to bear that pain which they themselves inflict; or, if the smart vex them, they have their revenge in their own hands, and were best whip themselves again for their folly.

ii. POSITIVELY.

In patience there must be, 1. *A quiet, willing submission to the hand of God.*

Which the Scripture expresseth to us, by taking up our cross: Matt. xvi. 24. Receiving evil at the hands of God: Job ii. 10. Accepting the punishment of our iniquities: Lev. xxvi. 41. Which all signify the ready and willing submission of the soul, under whatever God shall see fit to lay upon it.

2. *A quieting of our unruly passions.*

A calming of all those impetuous storms and tempests, which are apt to arise in a man's heart, when he is under any sore and heavy sufferings. Indeed, it is impossible, but that the affections will be stirring; but patience takes off the eagerness and bitterness of them: it ought to keep them from excess, and to soften and sweeten them; that the soul may not be ruffled into a tempest with them, but only gently purred with the breathings of a soft wind upon them. But, for all those turbulencies and uproars of the passions; all those violent and wild emotions, which distract reason and rend the soul to pieces, and make men unfit for the service of God and the employments of their lives: these patience ought to quell and suppress. And he, that doth not this, wants the principal part of patience; howsoever he may, possibly, command his outward expressions, and rule his actions better than he can his passions, and his body than his soul.

3. *All this must be done upon right grounds.*

Indeed, there is a natural patience: a patience that may be found in natural men, devoid of true grace; which is only a moral virtue, and proceeds only upon natural and moral principles. We find a writer of this class expressing himself thus: "It is folly to strive against fate; and it is equal folly, to torment ourselves about what we can help, and what we cannot help." (Pub. ap. Gell. Noct.) But that patience, which I am now speaking of, is a Christian grace, and proceeds not only upon such arguments and principles: no, it looks far higher; and eyes the sovereignty of God, to which it is our duty to submit: and it eyes also his wisdom and his goodness, to which it is our interest to submit. It looks off from the absolute nature of the affliction, considered as it is in itself, to the relative nature of it, as it is dispensed to us by God; and so concludes, that though the cup in itself be bitter, yet, in our Father's hand, it is salutary; and knows that it shall work for our gain and advantage, and make us partakers of God's holiness here, and of his glory hereafter.

II. The next thing is, to show, WHAT IS THE PROPER WORK OF PATIENCE.

And that I shall endeavor to do, in these following particulars.

i. The first work of patience is, as I have told you, TO QUIET AND COMPOSE THE SPIRIT OF THE AFFLICTED.

He is calm and sedate within, though his outward state and condition be full of storms and tempests; and saith, with St. Paul,

when he had spoken of the bonds and afflictions that awaited him, Acts xx. 24: "None of these things move me." But an impatient man flies out against heaven and earth, blasphemes God and curses men, rages at his sufferings and gnaws the very chains that tie him up: and, instead of humbling himself under God's mighty hand, is exasperated by his punishment; and, with that impious king, cries out, in all his extremity and anguish, "This evil is of the Lord: what should I wait for the Lord any longer?" 2 Kings, vi. 33.

ii. Another work of patience is, TO PUT A STOP TO ALL IMMODERATE COMPLAINTS.

It puts a man to silence; and lays a check upon all the intemperate eruptions of our grief and passions. "I was dumb," said David, "I opened not my mouth, because thou didst it:" Ps. xxxix. 9. It dares not so much as whimper against God; nor saucily expostulate with his infinite sovereignty, why he should bring such afflictions upon us. It is God, that hath done it: and, what! shall we, vile dust and ashes, control his proceedings, or take upon us to censure any of his dispensations? See a most notable instance of this patience, in Aaron: when his two sons, Nadab and Abihu, were destroyed by a most unparalleled judgment, and Moses brings him the sad tidings; tidings, which, one would expect, should have caused him to break forth into some passionate complaint; it is said, "Aaron held his peace:" Lev. x. 3, he had not a word to say: it was the Lord's doing: and, as it was wonderful, so it was just and righteous, in his eyes.

iii. Another work of patience under sufferings, is SELF-RESIGNATION TO THE SOVEREIGN WILL AND DISPOSAL OF ALMIGHTY GOD.

It takes a man off from his own bottom; and makes him renounce his own interests and concerns, and lay down his all; all his designs, all his hopes, all his possessions and enjoyments; at the feet of God:* desiring his wisdom to choose for him; and to

* "Courageously look up to God and say, 'Henceforth, let whatever I need be according to thy will; I am of thy mind, I am thine: I crave nothing forbidden by thee: lead me whither thou wilt. Dost thou will raiment? let it cover me. dost thou will I should be a ruler, or to remain in private life, to be settled or a wanderer, to be poor or to be rich, I will still confess thee before all men, and esteem thee more precious than all these things.'" *Epictetus* l. 2, c. 16.

carve him out that portion, which he knows to be most fitting and convenient.

This is the chief and most important work of patience.

And there are two notable elements, which go to the composition of it; self-denial, and submission.

1. *Patience works the soul to a self-denying frame and temper.*

Fretfulness and impatience do always proceed from self-love. When we are deeply engaged in an eager pursuit of that which we think advantageous to us, we are presently apt to storm and tumultuate, if any cross providence interpose, to entangle our designs and defeat our expectations: for, whilst we set up ourselves as our highest and utmost end, and seek only our own temporal profit and commodity, we must needs take it immoderately, if any thing succeed contrary to our hopes and desires. A cross lies very heavy, and is an insupportable load, upon a selfish man. And he, that makes this world his all, must needs look upon himself as utterly ruined and undone, if God take from him that, wherein he placeth his highest felicity: and therefore, no wonder, if he break out into passionate and intemperate exclamations: as Micah justified his outcries after the children of Dan: "Ye have taken away my gods.....and what have I more? and what is this that ye say unto me, What aileth thee?" Judges xviii. 24; so, exhort a selfish man to patience under any affliction, or loss, or calamity, that God hath brought upon him; alas! his earthly comforts are his gods: they are his all; and he cannot but account it a strange unreasonableness, that you should blame him for his passion, when his idols, his gods, and that, wherein he placed his only content and confidence, are taken from him. But a truly patient soul puts a lower rate and estimate upon these things: he values them, indeed, as comforts; otherwise, there could be no trial, and so no patience in the loss of them: but he values them not as his chief nor his only good; otherwise, he could have no patience in sustaining the loss of them: let God sequester his estate and reduce him to extreme poverty, scourge his body and lay upon him all the most racking pains and languishing diseases that life can subsist under, snatch away his friends and mow down all his nearest and dearest relations round about him, cut off all his props and worldly dependencies; yet, still, he looks not upon himself as undone: still he hath his God, and his Christ, and his grace left: his treasure is secure; and all the loss, that he sustains, is but in his accessory good things, which he never other-

wise received, but with condition and under the burden to part with them freely and quietly whensoever it should please the great proprietor of all things to call for them. Patience works a man to a great indifference to these worldly enjoyments: if God be pleased to spare them, he accepts it with thankfulness; or, if he see good to deprive him of them, he quarrels not at his Father's providence; for, still, God leaves him more than he takes, so long as he leaves him himself: they are but his smaller concernments, in which God toucheth him; and, what matter of importance is it, if God prune off his excrescences, seeing this tends only to make him more beautiful and more fruitful? God doth but deny him that, wherein he hath learned to deny himself.

2. As patience works the soul to a self-denying, so it does likewise to a *submissive frame and temper*.

When it hath brought a man to renounce his own will, it then resolves him into the will of God: it takes him out of his own hand and puts him into God's. Here patience finds its footing, in the deepest waters of affliction: upon this ground it stands, and upon this it fixeth: "It is the will and good pleasure of my Father, that thus and thus it shall be with me; and, therefore, so be it." Indeed, all religion lies in conforming our wills to the will of God: that there should be but one will between God and us; and that this should be his most wise and righteous will. The will of his precept he hath made known unto us by his word; and to that we ought to submit our wills, by a cheerful performance of what he hath commanded. The will of his purpose he makes known unto us by his providence; and to that we ought to submit, by a quiet bearing of whatsoever he shall see good to inflict. Art thou poor, or despised, or diseased, afflicted by God, or persecuted by men? Set patience at work: and this will lighten thy burden, and ease thee of thy sorrows; by reflecting, that it is the will of God to have it so: yea, and thy will shall run into, and mingle with his; so that thou shalt suffer willingly whatsoever he shall please to bring upon thee. Indeed, we ought not so to will and affect sufferings, as causelessly to involve ourselves in them: we may abhor them, as they are in themselves considered; and, by all lawful means, seek to secure or free ourselves from them. But, yet, a patient Christian wills them, though not absolutely, yet conditionally: he wills that the will of God should take place, and have its accomplishment. And, indeed, there is great reason he should do so; for he knows that the issue will be to his exceeding great gain and advantage. And, therefore, if the Lord will, he

dare not gainsay; but, with a holy meekness, gives in his vote, and surrenders his will, as no longer his, but melted and resolved into the will of his Father. It was a most divine and heavenly speech of the heathen philosopher Epictetus: "I will say unto God, did I ever find fault, or accuse thy government of affairs? I was sick, because thou wouldst: others also have been sick, but I willingly. I was poor, because thou wouldst; but therefore joyful in my poverty, since it was thy pleasure. I never was in authority, because thou wouldst not; and thou knowest, that therefore I never desired authority. Did I ever appear before thee with a sad and dejected countenance, as one, that had suffered a repulse, or been defeated of his hopes? Behold, I am ready to obey whatever thou shalt enjoin: if it be to quit the stage, I go. But, before I leave the world, I render unto thee my most humble thanks, that thou hast been pleased to admit me into the theatre, to be a spectator and admirer of thy works." This was the profession of a heathen. See the practice of this excellent patience, in some Scripture examples. When Samuel had delivered to Eli the sad doom, which God had pronounced against his house, "It is the Lord," saith that good old man: "let him do what seemeth him good:" 1 Sam. iii. 18: it is the Lord, whose sovereignty, whose wisdom and goodness are infinite; and, therefore, though his present ways seem dark and obscure to me, I resign myself wholly unto him: "let him do what seemeth him good." And so, likewise, David delivers himself up unto God: 2 Sam. xv. 25, 26: "If I shall find favor in the eyes of the Lord, he will bring me again, and show me both it (the ark), and his habitation: but, if he thus say, I have no delight in thee; behold, here am I, let him do to me as seemeth good unto him." And thus, likewise, a far greater than both these, even our Lord Jesus Christ, yields himself wholly to his father's will and pleasure: Luke xxii. 42: "Father, if thou be willing, remove this cup from me: nevertheless, not my will, but thine, be done." Christ is willing not to have his own will: and so every patient Christian brings his will to this submission; that it is his will, that not his, but God's will should be fulfilled.

iv. Another work of patience, is, A HOLY ENDEARING OF OUR AFFLICTIONS TO US; when it brings us to account them precious, and to reckon them as choice mercies and favors bestowed upon us.

Patience will make the soul thankful for corrections; esteeming it a token of God's special regard and condescension towards us,

that he will vouchsafe to afflict us. We are all prone to think, that God never minds us, but when he is continually heaping new mercies and enjoyments upon us; and if any cross or calamity befall us, we presently fear, that God hath forgotten us: but patience teacheth a Christian to believe, that, in every affliction, whatsoever it be, God doth most particularly regard our concerns; that he is as mindful of us, when he chastises, as when he favors us. And, therefore, we should account afflictions as dear a pledge of God's love, as prosperity and indulgence. Nay, indeed, we have as much need of the one, as of the other: for, as we are apt to be too much dejected, if we see none but black and lowering days; so we are, on the other side, apt to be puffed up with a continual uninterrupted course of prosperity, to grow wanton and secure, to forget ourselves and the God of all our mercies. And, as weeds grow fastest in a fat and rank soil, so our corruptions grow and thrive, and are ready to overrun our souls, when our outward state and condition is most prosperous and successful: and, therefore, God's love and care of us constrain him sometimes to use severe discipline, to nip those luxuriations, and to cut us short in our temporal enjoyments; which else, he sees, we should only turn into provision for our lusts. And, did we but seriously consider the great improvements we might make of afflictions and the great advantages we might gain, how they serve for the exercise of our graces, the confirmation of our hope, the evidence of our inheritance, the seed of our future joys; patience would not only account them tolerable but comfortable, and advance from being patience to be rejoicing and triumph. Therefore the Apostle, in speaking of persecuted saints, saith, they "took joyfully, the spoiling of their goods; knowing in themselves, that they had in heaven a better and an enduring substance:" Heb. x. 34. And thus David (as once his Jonathan) tastes honey from the top of the rod; Ps. xxiii. 4: "Thy rod and thy staff, they comfort me:" not only God's staff to support him, but even his rod to chastise and correct him, were sweet and comfortable to him.

v. Another work of patience is, TO RECONCILE A MAN TO THE INSTRUMENTS OF HIS SUFFERINGS: to make him willing to forgive them himself; and to pray to God for their pardon and forgiveness, who is far more offended by them than we can be.

Thus our Lord Jesus Christ, who is set forth to us in Scripture, as the great example of all grace, but especially of this of patience, pours out his prayers for those who were pouring out

his blood; Luke xxiii. 34: "Father, forgive them; for they know not what they do." And his holy martyr, St. Stephen, when his murderers were pelting him with stones, pelts not them with curses and imprecations, as an impatient man would do; but with Christian meekness, kneels upon that ground to which they were beating him, and prays, that God would not lay that sin to their charge: Acts vii. 60. And, by this one effect of patience, we may easily perceive, that it is a grace very rarely to be found in our days: we look upon it as too phlegmatic a piece of Christianity, to pass by an injury unrevenged: we are grown testy and choleric; and, when we apprehend ourselves in the least wronged, if we draw not our swords, yet we draw our tongues, which are full as sharp and trenchant; and shoot out our arrows, even bitter words; and nourish an implacable enmity in our hearts, against all whom we apprehend to have been the causes or occasions of those wrongs and sufferings which we undergo. What doth this argue, but that we look not at God in our sufferings? We eye not his hand, nor his providence, in bringing them upon us: we consider not, that their malice is overruled by his wisdom; and that he makes use of it, to accomplish his own purposes and designs; and so, while, like dogs, we bite and snarl at the stones that are thrown at us, we do but interpretatively fly at him that casts them; and would even rend him in pieces, were he within our reach and power. Whereas,* a truly patient spirit looks above and beyond the wickedness and malice of men, to the justice and wisdom of God: and this suppresses the ebullitions of his passions and all attempts at revenge, which else his wrath and corrupt nature would prompt him to take. See a notable instance of this in David, 2 Sam. xvi. 10, when Shimei came out, like a man distracted with rage and passion, and flung dust and curses confusedly into the air together: "Let him curse," saith David, "because the Lord hath said unto him, curse David:" he represseth his own and his captain's revenge upon that wretch, and maintaineth the peace and tranquillity of his patience, because he looked beyond the instrument, unto God, who righteously makes use of the wickedness of men for his own ends.

vi. Another work of patience is, TO OBSTRUCT ALL DISHONOR

* "Though one may feel angry at provocations, yet he should prefer to restrain his anger rather than interfere with the administration of justice by which God suppresses wickedness." *Hierocles*, p. 122.

ABLE OR UNLAWFUL WAYS OF DELIVERANCE FROM THOSE SUFFERINGS UNDER WHICH WE LIE.

Patience will not suffer a man to accept deliverance, if he cannot free the honor of God and the purity of his own conscience from stain, as well as his outward man from trouble: he will not make such an unworthy commutation, as to leave his God or his conscience to suffer in his stead: no; rather let bonds, reproach, afflictions, and death do their worst upon him, than that he should hazard his soul, to save his skin: if he cannot break through a sad and entangling providence but by breaking a command, let the worst come that can come, he keeps his station; and will not move one foot without the compass of the word, though he might thereby escape all his sorrows and sufferings: he is resolved that the devil shall never bail him; nor will he, by any unlawful arts and methods, wrest himself out of God's hands, to put himself into Satan's. This patience it was, that made the holy martyrs, spoken of Heb. xi., generously scorn to accept deliverance, when it was tendered to them upon unworthy and unwarrantable terms: they were not so stupid, nor so profuse and lavish of their lives, as to cast them away, could they have saved both them and their religion too; but, when the condition of their temporal safety was their eternal destruction, when they could no longer live here unless they consented to die forever, welcome then death and torments, the rack and the fire, welcome the prison or the stake, to which the laws of God fastened them more straitly than even their fetters and their chains. But impatience puts a man upon any base and wicked means, to free himself from his present sufferings: thus Saul's impatience in waiting for Samuel forceth him, first, to offer sacrifice, whereby he forfeited his kingdom; and, afterwards, his impatience to know the success of his affairs drives him to consult with a witch, whereby he lost his life. And, how many forlorn wretches are there, who, through impatience under the temporal evils which they suffer, desperately cut off their own lives, and thereby plunge themselves into eternal torments!

And thus, in these six particulars, you see what is the proper work of patience. It is: to quiet and compose the spirits of the afflicted: to put a stop to all immoderate and murmuring complaints: to make men willingly resign themselves unto the sovereign will and disposal of God: to sweeten and endear afflictions to them: to render them placable and reconcilable to the instru-

ments of their sufferings: and, lastly, to obstruct all dishonorable and unlawful ways of deliverance.

III. The third general is, to show, WHEN IT IS, that patience hath its perfect work. To this I answer:

i. Patience hath then its perfect work, WHEN IT IS PROPORTIONABLE TO THE SUFFERINGS AND AFFLICTIONS UNDER WHICH WE LIE; and that, both in duration and fortitude. And, therefore,

1. *If thy afflictions and sorrows be of long continuance, thy patience, that it may be perfect, must be prolonged.*

It must be lengthened out according to the affliction; nor must we faint, till it shall please God to put a period to his chastisements and our sufferings. If thy patience wear off one day before thy trouble doth, it hath not its perfect work. Sometimes, God doth bring such afflictions and trials upon his people, as shall hold them at work all their days, and scarce afford them any intermission and breathing-time: and, if it prove so with thee, know, that thy patience ought to run parallel with thy trouble. If God will not take thy burden off, but make thee travel with it till the evening, till thou liest down to take thy rest in the grave, thy patience must hold out till then, if thou wouldst have it perfect. And, though the Apostle speaks of "our light afflictions, which are but for a moment:" yet remember, that, as they are light only in comparison with the intolerable torments of hell; so, likewise, they are many times short, only in comparison with eternity: they are short, only because they are not endless; but, yet, this short moment may hold out as long as thy whole life. Now, then, O Christian! look upon thyself as a traveler; and make account, that whatsoever burden God is pleased to lay upon thee, he may perhaps not take it off till thou comest to thy inn, to take up thy lodging in the grave. If he discharge thee of it sooner, acknowledge his mercy; but be sure thou discharge not thy patience, before God dischargeth thy burden.

2. Sometimes our sorrows and sufferings are very deep, our burdens very heavy and pressing: and God brings upon us not only long, but sharp and severe sufferings; such as he threatened, Deut. xxviii. 59: "Great plagues, and of long continuance; and sore sicknesses, and of long continuance." He may give thee a deep draught of the bitter cup, and squeeze into it the very spirit and quintessence of gall and wormwood. Now, in this case, that thy patience may be perfect, it must be strong, as well as lasting: it

must have nerves and sinews in it, to bear weighty burdens. When thou canst take up the heaviest load and go away roundly with it, when thou canst endure the sharpest methods of caustics and incisions with a manly spirit, then is thy patience perfect. But, "If thou faint in the day of adversity, thy strength is small." Prov. xxiv. 10.

ii. That our patience may be perfect, IT MUST BE PROPORTIONABLE, ALSO, TO THE NEED OF THE SUFFERER.

For then hath patience its perfect work, when a man bears whatsoever is necessary for him. We suffer, as a sick man takes physic: though the potion be bitter, yet he must take such a quantity as is prescribed for the cure of his disease. Truly, our afflictions are but medicines for our souls: it may be, small quantities, or a few doses, are not sufficient to work out the malignity of our distemper; and, therefore, we must continue and submit, until our great physician hath perfected his cure upon us; and then is our patience perfect. Possibly, God sees thee proud and arrogant in thy prosperity; and, therefore, he brings some sharp affliction upon thee, that may lance the swelling tumor of thy mind, and let out thy corruption: perhaps, he sees thy disease is covetousness, and too much love of this world; and, therefore, to cure this dropsy in thee, he deals with thee as physicians do with dropsical patients; takes from thee that, which, though it please thy appetite, yet miserably increaseth thy distemper: perhaps, he sees thou art falling asleep in carnal security; and, therefore, to awaken and rouse thee out of this lethargy, he makes use of incisions and caustics. Now, both the cure and thy patience are then perfect, when, of a proud and high-minded person, he hath brought thee to an humble and meek spirit; when, of a worldly and self-seeking person, he hath made thee a public-spirited and self-denying Christian; when, of a drowsy and secure, he hath made thee a vigilant, zealous, and active Christian.

iii. That thy patience may be perfect, IT MUST BE A JOYFUL PATIENCE.

Thou must not suffer, and repine: this is only patience extorted, and by force: but suffer, and rejoice; and bless and thank that God, taking from thee, whom thou didst bless, giving to thee. Ignatius in his Epistle to Polycarp says, "a great champion expects to be severely handled though a conqueror." And, as we have the greatest cause of joy, so we should then, especially,

show it, if at any time we may suffer for the testimony of Jesus, and the sake of a good conscience. It is said, Acts v. 41, the Apostles rejoiced, "that they were counted worthy to suffer....for his name."

IV. That, which remains, is only to ENFORCE upon you this exhortation of the Apostle: that all, who name the name of Christ, the great example of patience, would strive to get; and, having got, to exercise; and, by exercise, to strengthen and perfect, this most excellent grace.

And, in prosecuting this, I shall observe the following method. Give several motives and inducements unto patience.

Show the several distempers of a man's spirit, which are great hindrances of patience.

Give the cure of these; and lay down some means, that may be helpful to advance and strengthen patience in us.

i. For the MOTIVES to patience: they are many and powerful.

And such, indeed, they had need be, to persuade our fretful and peevish natures to exercise so hard a grace. There are none of us, who at all reflect upon the working of our own spirits, but find it a difficult matter to keep down the tumults of our unruly passions. When a cross providence intervenes, either to frustrate our expectations or deprive us of our present enjoyments, they will mutiny and rebel: so that it is almost as easy an undertaking to persuade the sea into a calm, when winds and storms beat boisterously upon it; as it is to compose the minds of men into a smooth and equal temper, when they are assaulted with any tempestuous providences.

Yet grace can work those wonders, which nature cannot: and that God, to whom all things are possible, can make our hearts calm, when our outward condition is tempestuous; and, though he lets forth his winds upon us, can keep us from being discomposed and ruffled by them; and lay the same command upon our passions, as Christ did upon the waves; "Peace, be still."

There are several considerations, that will tend mightily to hush all the disturbances of our spirits, under all our sorrows and sufferings.

1. *That there is nothing more necessary for a Christian*, in the whole conduct of his life, than the work and exercise of patience.

What saith the Apostle, Heb. x. 36? "Ye have need of patience; that, after ye have done the will of God, ye might receive the

promise." It is a most necessary grace for a Christian: not only as all other graces are necessary to make him such, for so we have need of them all, at least, in the root and habit, and in the proper seasons for the exercise of them; but the Apostle speaks it *signanter*, and by way of special remark, "Ye have need of patience:" need of the continual exercise, strength, and perfection of this grace. And this especial necessity of patience will appear, if we consider,

(1) That our whole life is but a scene of sorrows and troubles.

They spring up thick about us, and surround us in every condition: put thyself in what posture and state of life thou wilt, still thou shalt find something to molest and disquiet thee; for our rest is not here. Who can recount the personal, domestic, or more public sorrows, which he undergoes; as if breath were only given unto us, to spend it in sighs and groans? The truth is, we pass through the world, as men that run the gauntlet, and must receive a lash and stripe every step we take. "Man is born unto trouble, as the sparks fly upward:" Job v. 7: he is born to it: it is his inheritance and portion, that descends to him from his father Adam; entailed upon him by the curse of the law annexed to our first transgression: and born unto it, "as the sparks fly upward:" that is, our troubles come upon us naturally and spontaneously, as is the ascending motion of sparks; and they are as thick and fiery, as those "sons of the burning coal," as the original expression hath it. Now, if sorrow and sufferings do thus make up the greatest part of our lives, is it not absolutely necessary to fortify our hearts with patience, quietly and meekly to bear whatsoever it shall seem good to the all-wise providence of God to inflict upon us? Afflictions are necessary for us. "If need be," saith the Apostle, "ye are in heaviness through manifold temptations:" 1 Pet. i. 6: more necessary and more advantageous than prosperity; to nip our luxuriences, to rouse our sloth, and awaken our security; to make us remember God and ourselves. And, shall afflictions be thus necessary for us, and not patience to undergo them? While thou livest in this world, thou sailest upon a rough sea: the waves and the billows work high: and wilt thou expose thyself to these storms, like a forlorn vessel without helm, or tackling, or ballast, to be tossed up and down upon the back of every wave, ready to be swallowed up every moment, or dashed against every rock in thy way? Patience is the ballast of the soul, that will keep it from rolling and tumbling in the greatest storms: and he, that will venture out without this to make him sail even

and steady, will certainly make shipwreck, and drown himself; first, in the cares and sorrows of this world; and, then, in perdition.

(2) Consider, that patience is necessary to alleviate and lighten the afflictions we suffer.

The same burden shall not, by this means, have the same weight in it. There is a certain skill in taking up our load upon us, to make it sit handsome and easy; whereas, others, that take it up untowardly, find it most cumbersome and oppressive: let the very same affliction befall two persons; the one, a patient, meek, and self-resigning soul; the other, a proud, fretful wretch, that repines and murmurs at every cross and every disappointment; and, with how much more ease shall the one bear it, than the other! The burden is the very same, but only the one is sound and whole, and it doth not wring nor pinch him; but the other's impatience hath galled him, and every burden is more grievous and intolerable to him, because it lies upon a raw and sore spirit. And, therefore, since afflictions and sufferings are unavoidable in this life, which is a vale of misery and tears, if thou wouldst make thy sufferings easy and supportable, fret not thyself at any dispensation of the Divine providence: keep thy spirit sound; and, whatsoever burden it shall please God to lay upon thee, add not to it by thy impatience: be not ingenious to torment thyself, by thy own troublesome thoughts and reflections; nor to find out circumstances to aggravate thy sufferings: swallow down the bitter draught, that God puts into thy hand, without straining it through thy teeth; for so the trouble will be sooner over and less distasteful. It is not so much the wearing, as the striving with our yoke, that wrings and galls us: and, as it is with beasts caught in a snare, so is it with impatient men; the more they struggle, the closer and faster they draw the knot, and make their sufferings more uneasy and their escape more impossible. But patience gives the soul some kind of scope, and liberty under afflictions: they may surround him; but at some distance; he may be "troubled on every side;" "yet" he is "not distressed:" he may be God's prisoner; but yet he is not cast into shackles and fetters: and, though the affliction come very close to his outward man and his temporal estate, yet, so long as patience hath her perfect work, it can never corrode or eat into his spirit: in this sense, the iron enters not into his soul.

2. Another motive to patience may be, to consider, *who is the Author and Inflicter of all the sufferings which thou undergoest.*

Possibly, when thou eyest only the instruments of thy suffer-

ings, their disingenuous, unworthy, and spiteful way of proceeding, thy impatience may take advantage to fret and torment thee: but, if thou wouldst look up to the principal cause, thou wouldst find abundant reason meekly to submit; for it is the hand and dispensation of God. There are many things in this reflection, that should quiet and stablish our minds, under all the afflictions and trials with which we are exercised.

(1) Consider, that God is the absolute and incontrollable Sovereign of all the world.

He doth whatsoever pleaseth him, in heaven, and in earth, and with all things: "and none can stay his hand, or say unto him, what doest thou?" Dan. iv. 35. "Why dost thou strive against him? for he giveth not account of any of his matters:" Job xxxiii. 13. Consider, you are, in God's hands, but as so much clay in the hands of the potter: and wilt thou, O arrogant man, dispute with him, why he hath so formed thee, or, why he thus breaks thee? Satisfy thyself, that it is fit and reasonable it should be with thee as it is: for so is the sovereign will of God; and his will being the first and supreme cause, must needs be the highest reason in the world. Canst thou contend with the Almighty? Or wrest either his scepter or his rod out of his hand? If not, what folly and madness is it, to vex and fret thyself at the accomplishment of that will upon thee, which never was, never can be frustrated? We may impotently, in both senses of the word, wish and desire this or that to come to pass: but, alas! where is our power, where is our authority, to effect it? Shall thy designs give laws to his purposes? Or, will the course of second causes stoop to thy appointment, or run according to thy arbitration? It will only be our torture to struggle, when it is not in our power to dispose. And know, that thou dost insolently invade the prerogative of the Almighty, when thou repinest at any of his dispensations: for it shows a rebellious will in thee, to rescind his decrees, and disturb the method and order of his administration of affairs.

(2) Consider, that God is not only our sovereign, but he is our proprietor.

All our comforts and enjoyments, yea our very selves, are infinitely more God's, than they are ours: he hath but lent them to us, for our present use and service; but the title and propriety are still his own. And what hath busy and forward man to do, to intermeddle with that, wherein he is least of all concerned? Thy children, thy estate, thy liberty, yea thy life itself, whatsoever is dearest to thee and most prized by thee, is not so much thine, as

it is God's. And what presumption then is it, to prescribe unto him, or to murmur against him, for disposing as he pleaseth, what so entirely appertains unto him! may he not do what he will with his own? Certainly, this consideration alone, were it well wrought into our hearts, would be sufficient to allay all our impatience, and to silence all our repining thoughts: That, since all is God's, we ought rather to bless him, and gratefully to acknowledge his goodness, that he hath spared us any comforts thus long, than to complain of his rigor and severity, that he is pleased again to call for them from us, and to require again what he only lent but never alienated.

(3) Consider the relation, wherein God stands unto thee.

He is not only thy sovereign and proprietor, which are titles of awe and majesty; but he is thy Father, which is the most sweet and endearing title of love and mercy: a Father, whose bowels yearn and roll towards thee, while he is correcting thee: Jer. xxxi. 20. "Is Ephraim my dear son? is he a pleasant child? for since I spake against him, I do earnestly remember him still: therefore my bowels are troubled for him: I will surely have mercy upon him, saith the Lord:" he undertakes this work of correction unwillingly; and, as it were, by constraint; "For he doth not afflict willingly, nor grieve the children of men:" Lam. iii. 33: were it not that he sees this discipline of the rod is necessary for thee, thou shouldst never have other from him, but smiles and favors. Nay, God hath given us the highest expression of his tenderness, that ever could proceed from the heart of the most affectionate and compassionate father: Isa. lxiii. 9. "In all their affliction, he was afflicted:" as a tender-hearted father chastiseth his children, with as much grief and regret as they themselves feel it; so doth God. And, should not this, then, be a prevailing motive unto patience, to consider, that it is our Father who chastiseth us; a Father, who is infinitely gracious and merciful, and whose mercy and pity alone put him upon this his strange and unwelcome work? Shall I murmur and fret, because his goodness takes this necessary way of expressing itself towards me? Because he is not so cruel, as to destroy me, by sparing me; and eternally to damn me, rather than, if need be, for a short time to cross and grieve me? Certainly, if there be any childlike ingenuousness in us, we ought rather to kiss the rod, and the hand that lays it on; to bless and praise God, that he expresseth so much of a Father as to correct us. The Apostle strongly enforceth this argument: Heb. xii. 9, 10. Our earthly fathers correct us, and

we give them reverence: how much more shall we "be in subjection unto the Father of spirits," since he never chastiseth us out of passion and humor, as earthly parents often do, but "for our profit?" When we can thus look off from the absolute, to the relative nature of our afflictions; from them, as they are evil in themselves, to them, as they are in the hand and at the disposal of our heavenly Father; we shall find more cause of joy and comfort, than of sorrow and repining. Thus, our blessed Saviour supports himself: John xviii. 11. "The cup, which my Father hath given me, shall I not drink it?" Though we loathe the cup of afflictions, in itself considered, as it hath many bitter ingredients in it; yet, when we look upon it, as it is held out to us in the hand of God, this will sweeten that bitter potion, and make us look upon every dispensation as a mercy.

(4) Consider, again; that it is an infinitely wise God that afflicts thee; and, therefore, thou mayest well acquiesce in his providences.

Indeed, if afflictions did only befall us by blind chance; if they sprung up only out of the dust, as occurrences merely casual and contingent, without any intelligent nature to overrule and guide them; we might possibly give vent to our impatience by exclaiming against ill-hap and bad fortune; and be, if not more reasonable, yet, at least, less impious: but, when all events are eternally scanned and premeditated; when infinite wisdom hath sat in council, and maturely deliberated every minute circumstance of our lives; when there is not the least dust that falls into our eye, not the least trip or wrench of thy foot, but infinite wisdom foresaw and consulted about it, whether it should so fall out or no, infinite ages before the foundations of the world were laid; it is very foolish, as well as very wicked, for us, blind men, to find fault with the resolutions and conduct of divine wisdom and foreknowledge. God's providence is described by the prophet Ezekiel, to be a great wheel, *full of eyes*: now, though he bring this wheel over thee, and crush thee by it; yet know, oh Christian! that it sees its way. All thy sorrows and sufferings are chosen out for thee, by that God, who doth inflict them.

[1] He knows the just proportion of what thou art to undergo.

He is the wise physician, that knows what ingredients, and what quantities of each, are fittest for thee to take; and will so temper them, both for measure and time, as shall be most proper and healthful for thee. And, if he prescribe thee a large and a bitter draught, appease thyself, and quiet the tumults of thy

passions, with this consideration, that it was his infinite skill and art, that directed him so to do.

[2] He knows and considers the events and the consequences of things, which are hid in a profound obscurity from us short-sighted creatures.

1 Possibly, he intends thee the greatest mercy, when he brings the sorest trials upon thee; and, by pruning and lopping thee, designs only, that thou shalt grow the more stately and beautiful. His wisdom often so manageth our affairs, as to bring good out of evil, light out of darkness, and life itself out of death: and that, of which at present we cannot conceive otherwise but that it tends to our ruin, proves afterwards the only means of our safety and preservation. And, therefore, since we ourselves are so infinitely foolish and God so infinitely wise, we may well, with patience and thankfulness, give up the disposal and government of ourselves unto him: for, believe it; undoubtedly, if God should model his providences according to our methods and contrivances, he need take no other way to curse and ruin us.

(5) Consider, God is a faithful God.

And this should be another encouragement, patiently to bear whatsoever he shall lay upon us. Thus the Apostle urgeth it, 1 Pet. iv. 19: "Wherefore, let them that suffer according to the will of God, commit the keeping of their souls to him in well doing, as unto a faithful Creator." He is faithful to his word and promise, which he will certainly fulfil, in his due and appointed season.

Now, as there is no condition that needs more, so there is no condition that hath more promises made to it, than an afflicted and suffering condition.

[1] He hath promised a moderation of all our afflictions.

1 Cor. x. 13: "God is faithful, who will not suffer you to be tempted above that ye are able; but will, with the temptation, also make a way to escape, that ye may be able to bear it." He will proportion our burden to our strength, and not lay heavy loads upon weak shoulders.

[2] He hath promised his presence with, and his comforts and assistance to, the afflicted.

Isa. xliii. 2: "When thou passest through the waters, I will be with thee; and through the rivers, they shall not overflow thee: when thou walkest through the fire, thou shalt not be burnt; neither shall the flame kindle upon thee." And, certainly, the presence and the consolations of God are such, as can sweeten the

most bitter condition, and make the waters of Marah pleasant and refreshing.

[3] He hath promised to rescue thee out of all thy dangers, and to deliver thee out of all thy sorrows and troubles.

Job v. 19: "He shall deliver thee in six troubles; yea, in seven, and there shall no evil touch thee." However,

[4] He hath made thee that universal promise, which shines among all the rest, as the sun in the firmament, and were enough, if there were no other besides, to give light and comfort to a believing soul, under the saddest circumstances: that all our sorrows and sufferings shall, in the end, contribute to our gain and advantage.

Rom. viii. 28: "All things work together for good, to them that love God." He can make the top of the rod yield us honey, and the eater meat: for he is Almighty, and he will do it; for he is faithful, who hath promised. And, what folly then is it, to murmur and complain of our afflictions, seeing our very afflictions are our great advantages! and could we, with a wish, transform our condition, and make it such as we fancy and desire, yet it would be far worse with us than now it is.

Well then, oh Christian! though thou mayst be troubled when thou lookest to second causes, and to the instruments and occasions of thy afflictions; yet, look unto God, the great guide and governor of all things: consider his sovereignty, his propriety, his wisdom, his fatherly mercy, and his faithfulness; and, if impatience hath not tainted thy very reason, and fretted thee out of all use of serious thoughts and reflections, thou wilt find abundant cause to bear all thy burdens, not only with submission, but with thankfulness.

(6) To this let me add one consideration more concerning God: and that is, that he is "the God of patience."

So he is styled, Rom. xv. 5: "The God of patience." And that, not only as he is the God, that requires patience from us; not only as he is the God, that gives patience to us; not only as he is the God, that doth own and crown patience in us; but as he is the God, that doth himself exercise infinite patience towards us. He bears more from us than we can possibly bear from him. He bears our sins, whereas we only bear his chastisements: and sin is infinitely more contrary to God's nature, than suffering can be unto ours. And what strange disingenuousness is it, when we daily offer many horrid affronts and indignities against his Divine Majesty, and yet expect that he should put up with them and pass them

by with patience; yet, that we should murmur and fret, and cannot quietly bear the least correction from the hand of God! Certainly, we allow ourselves strange privilege and advantage, that we can be content, the great God of heaven and earth should daily suffer by our sins; and yet cannot be content, when we suffer a little by his chastisement.

Thus, did we but well consider the author and inflicter of all our sufferings, it would much help us patiently to undergo them.

3. Consider *what thou hast deserved*.

And this will be a most unanswerable argument for patience under what thou feelest. If God should extract the very spirit and quintessence out of all the most bitter things in the world, and put this potion in thy cup, and make thee drink of it all thy days; yet, all this is nothing to what thou hast deserved. When thou liest under any pain or sickness, or whatsoever misery and affliction it be, think with thyself, "This is nothing, to one gripe of hell-torments; much less, to an eternity of them." Think with thyself, "Though this be grievous which I now suffer; yet, how happy is it for me, that I am not now in hell! If I now feel so much pain, when I am but a little touched with his finger; oh! what intolerable anguish should I have felt, had I now lain under the furious strokes of his almighty arm! And shall I howl, and fret, and be impatient, when I have infinitely more reason to bless God, that it is no worse with me, than to complain, that it is thus?" Thus, I say, compare your sorrows and sufferings with your deserts; and this will be a most effectual means to excite you to a patient bearing of them.

4. A fourth motive to patience may be the consideration of *the great benefits and advantages, that accrue to us by afflictions*.

It is true, that afflictions, in themselves considered, can have no great encomiums made of them: for, so, they are rather pernicious and destructive, than any way conducive unto the welfare of those that suffer them: that man must have worn off all impressions of natural good and evil, whoever shall think, that pains and sorrows are but delights and recreations: after all the grave dictates of philosophy, pains will be pains; and diseases, diseases, still: and, if reason should presume to teach sense to judge what is pleasant and what is grievous, it would exceed its due bounds, and grow very profoundly ridiculous: it is work enough for patience to bear them as they are; it is not required, that we should account them pleasures and diversions; and those, who are of such a cynical humor, deserve enough of such blessings. But, though

afflictions be in themselves evil, yet are they capable of such excellent improvements, that the good, which shall spring from them, will more than compensate the pain and grief of our present sufferings. To this accords that of the Apostle, Heb. xii. 11: "No chastening for the present seemeth to be joyous, but grievous: nevertheless, afterward it yieldeth the peaceable fruit of righteousness unto them which are exercised thereby." As the ploughing up of a field seems utterly to spoil the beauty of it, when its smoothness and verdure are turned into rough and unsightly furrows, and all its herbs and flowers buried under deformed clods of earth; but yet, afterwards, in the days of harvest, when the fields laugh and sing for joy, when the furrows stand thick with corn and look like a boundless sea and inundation of plenty, they yield an incomparable delight to the eyes of the beholders, and welcome sheaves into the bosom of the reapers: so, when God ploughs up any of his children and makes long furrows upon their backs, it may possibly seem somewhat a strange method of his husbandry, thus to deform the flourishing of their present condition; but yet, afterwards, when the seed, which he casts into these furrows, is sprung up; when it shall overspread their souls, and shake like Lebanon; both the wisdom and goodness of Divine providence will be made apparent, in thus converting a barren prosperity into a more fruitful adversity; and, though they go forth weeping, yet they "shall, doubtless, come again with rejoicing, bringing their sheaves with them;" as the Psalmist speaks, Ps. cxxvi. 6. And, therefore, since afflictions may be thus improved to so great an advantage, impatience and fretfulness under them may be justly censured, not only as impiety, but folly.

Now, there are four sorts of improvements and advantages, that we may make of our afflictions.

(1) As they are the *exercise of our graces*, so they keep them lively and active.

Exercise, you know, though it weary and tire the body for the present, yet conduceth to its health and soundness. Now afflictions are the soul's exercise, by which God keeps our graces in breath, which else would languish and be choked up. And, though this exercise may sometimes be very violent, so as to make the soul pant and run down with sweat; yet this tends to better its constitution and to remove that sluggish phlegm, which otherwise would obstruct and oppress it. And, therefore, oh Christian! whatsoever thy present troubles and afflictions be, know, that God brings them upon thee, only to breathe thy graces, and make them the more healthful and

vigorous. Possibly, he takes from thee all thy outward props and dependencies, to try thy faith; whether it can lean firmly upon a promise, and be confident enough to take his word without a pawn. Possibly, he lets loose all his winds and his waves upon thee: the whole face of heaven may be muffled with clouds; and, for many days, thou mayst see neither sun nor star, no other lights but those flashes which are more terrible and dismal than darkness itself: and all this, only to try the temper of thy hope; whether that anchor be strong enough to hold out in a storm. And, if ever Providence should call thee to lay down thy secular enjoyments, or thy life itself, for the profession of the name of Christ, this is only to try the ardency of thy love and zeal, how much thou canst forego and undergo for his sake; whether thou canst espouse a naked truth, a destitute and forsaken Christ, when reproaches, revilings, persecutions, and martyrdom, are the only dowry thou canst here expect. Thus, I say, God often brings afflictions upon his people, that their graces may be exercised; and, upon trial, be found unto praise, and honor, and glory, when their faith shall appear victorious, their hope tenacious, and their love sincere, in the midst of troubles, dangers, distresses, yea and death itself. As spices send forth their most fragrant scents, when they are most bruised; so are the graces of God's people more sweet and redolent, when they are crushed and bruised under the pressure of heavy afflictions. Now, as the trial and exercise of our strength is a natural means to increase it; so, this exercise of grace by afflictions is a proper means to get great strength and perfection of grace: all habits are confirmed in us by frequent acts: and, therefore, oh Christian! if thy afflictions put thee upon the acting of faith, and hope, and a generous unbiassed love of God, and self-denial, and humility; know, that thou art a great gainer by thy very losses, and happy in thy greatest troubles. Nay, if by suffering thou only learnest how to suffer, and growest more expert in patience, this alone is a sufficient recompense for all thy sorrows: it will be motive enough to any one, who knows the excellence of this divine grace, to suffer patiently, that he may be patient: see that remarkable place of the Apostle, Rom. v. 3, 4: "We glory in tribulations:" we esteem them our privilege and advantage: why so? Because "tribulation worketh patience:" we rejoice to have our patience tried, so long as the product of it is still patience: "and patience worketh experience:" we hereby grow to be experienced Christians; and, by long custom, find, that those troubles are not so dreadful, nor insupportable, when we come to grapple

with them, as we thought, when we stood at a distance. Indeed, experience and custom facilitate all things; and make that very easy, which before we accounted difficult, if not impossible. All birds, when they are first caught and put into their cage, fly wildly up and down, and beat themselves against their little prison: but, within two or three days, sit quietly upon their perch, and sing their usual notes, with their usual melody. So it fares with us. When God first brings us into straits, we wildly flutter up and down, and beat and tire ourselves, with striving to get free; but, at length, custom and experience will make our narrow confinement spacious enough for us; and, though our feet should be in the stocks, yet shall we, with the Apostles, be able, even there, to sing praises to our God. "And experience," saith the Apostle, worketh "hope;" inasmuch as having formerly undergone the like afflictions, we may, with the more confidence, expect either the like support, or the like deliverance. "And," lastly, "hope maketh not ashamed:" for the expectation of the righteous shall not be disappointed, but God will certainly deliver them, either from or by, all their sufferings and miseries. What a prevalent argument should this be unto patience under afflictions, since a true Christian makes such great improvements of his afflictions, that he would be an infinite loser, should he part with his advantages to be rid of his afflictions!

(2) Another advantage of afflictions is this: that they are physic to the soul, to expel and purge out its corruptions.

And, therefore, though the potion be bitter; yet, when it is administered to such an end, this should reconcile our antipathy, correct our nausea, and make us swallow it down without repining or murmuring. See that notable place, Isa. xxvii. 9: "By this, therefore, shall the iniquity of Jacob be purged; and this is all the fruit, to take away his sin." And afflictions do this, sometimes, by cutting off those provisions, which a more prosperous condition laid in, for the fulfilling of the lusts of the flesh: when we cannot have such large supplies for those vanities and follies, which before too much alienated our hearts from God. Sometimes, they work more kindly and ingenuously, in a moral way; as they put men upon serious reflections, and cause them to consider their ways and doings: those, who were never pensive nor thoughtful before, will be so, when the hand of God lies heavy upon them; then, they begin to examine and ransack their consciences; and, as mariners, in a storm, throw overboard their freight to lighten the vessel; so these, when they are in a tempestuous condition, cast out this and that sin to lighten their souls, that the tempest may

the sooner cease, or they the better out-ride it. And this is the very reason, why there is no place so holy as a sick-bed: have you never been conversant with those, who have been cast thereon, when their vessel hath sprung a plank, and death hath been leaking in on every side? Have you never observed, how they have then wholly applied themselves to prayer, and confession, and heavenly discourses? They are deadened to all the joys and vanities of the world; and detest their own folly, for ever loving and prizing them. And so is it, proportionably, in all other afflictions, that God brings upon us: they all tend to make us sober and considerate: for it is a natural impression upon the minds of men, that all our sufferings are for sin: and this cannot but engage us against those sins, the smart of which we so sensibly feel; and, having had such experience of the bitter effects of sin, we are, afterwards, made more capable of the counsel of our Saviour, to "sin no more, lest a worse thing befall us." Now, oh Christian! if this be the fruit of thy afflictions, to purge thee from thy sins, wilt thou complain, that God deals too severely with thee, when he intends thee so great a blessing? Canst thou patiently suffer incisions, caustics, searings, amputations, and cutting off of whole limbs, and all the merciful torture that the art of the physician puts thee to, for the recovery of thy bodily health? And, yet, wilt thou murmur against the great physician, when he takes those methods, which, though they are grievous, yet are safest for the cure of thy spiritual diseases, which are infinitely more dangerous and destructive than any corporal maladies can be? Certainly, thou either distrustest his skill, or foolishly preferest thy present ease before thy eternal safety; and wouldst rather go down to hell, having two eyes and two hands, than enter into heaven halt and maimed. Possibly, God sees, that thou hast taken a dangerous surfeit of worldly comforts: and wilt thou vex and fret, that he gives thee a medicine to cast up what thou canst not digest, and to rid thee of what was a load and oppression to thy soul and conscience? Perhaps, he sees thy mind is lifted up, and swells with the tumor of pride and vain glory, in a continued course of prosperity; and, therefore, the method of his goodness constrains him to lance thee: and wilt thou complain, that he wounds thee, when it is only to let out that purulence and corruption, which else might fester and gangrene, and prove thy utter bane and ruin? Could we but bring our untoward hearts to believe, that all our afflictions are but the prescriptions of our great physician; that he designs good to us by them; that, as much of our earthly enjoy-

ments as he takes from us, as much blood as he lets, so much of our corruption and peccant humors run out together with it; common reason would easily persuade us, to bear that with patience, which will so vastly redound to our benefit and advantage.

(3) A patient bearing of afflictions is a clear evidence of our adoption.

Indeed, our sufferings only prove us to be the sons of Adam, on whom the curse is entailed through his primitive transgression: but our patience under sufferings, is a strong proof and evidence, that we are the sons of God. All metals may be melted in the furnace; but it is the property of gold only, to endure the fire, and lose nothing of its weight or worth. The Apostle makes this the trial of our legitimacy: Heb. xii. 6-8. It is true, we cannot argue, that we are the children of God, merely because he scourgeth us; for God dispenseth afflictions, both as he is a Judge and as he is a Father: as he is a Judge, so he deals with wicked and ungodly men, often scourging them with rods, even in this life; and, afterwards, he eternally scourgeth them with scorpions in hell: but, then may we comfortably conclude, that he chasteneth us as a Father, when he gives us patience to bear his rebukes, and works in us a holy submission unto his divine will and pleasure: by this, he doth but set his mark upon thee; and, though it doth burn thee, yet this will be thy perpetual comfort, that, by this, he will own thee, and thou mayst know thyself to be his: so the Apostle tells us, (Gal. vi. 17,) that he bare in his body "the marks of the Lord Jesus;" that is, all the persecutions and tribulations which he underwent, as they did conform him to a resemblance with the Lord Jesus, so likewise they were so many characters imprinted upon him, declaring to whom he did belong. And now, oh Christian! is there any affliction so grievous, as such an evidence is comfortable? Will not this abundantly recompense the pain and smart of all thy sufferings, when thy patience in bearing them shall give thee in a testimony that thou art a child of God, and fill thy inward sense as full of joy as thy outward can be of trouble and sorrow; yea, a joy unspeakable and glorious, that shall swallow up all the afflictions which thou feelest, and make them inconsiderable nothings? As St. Stephen was so wholly wrapped up with his heavenly vision, that, though the Jews gnashed upon him with their teeth, and dragged him forth to stone him; yet he was so wholly fixed and intent upon the glory of that unexampled sight, that he regarded not their threats, nor the stones they threw at him, which, he knew, would but speed his way to heaven. So,

truly, when it pleaseth God to open heaven in a man's soul and to ravish his heart with the dear sense of his eternal love, all outward sorrows and troubles are not of force sufficient to disturb his thoughts; but he is wholly possessed with the consolations of God: he retreats inward, and enjoys himself in peace and unspeakable comfort, in that retirement where afflictions and tribulations cannot reach him; and they can no more embitter his joys, than one drop of gall can embitter the whole sea, when it is let fall into it. Now God never affords such large and overflowing measures of his consolations, as in an afflicted condition: he gives his strongest cordials, when the spirits are most apt to fail and sink. And, therefore, thou, who hast labored and prayed long for assurance, and wouldst esteem it a felicity next to the possession of heaven to know thy undoubted right unto it, set patience at work in all thy trials and afflictions: bear them quietly and submissively; and see, whether thou canst not read evidences enough for heaven, in the very print of the rod: see, whether God will not this way give thee in so much comfort, as shall turn thy patience into joy and triumph.

(4) Consider, that a patient suffering of afflictions will make rich additions to the weight and splendor of thy crown of glory.

And wilt thou then, oh Christian! murmur and repine at the weight of thy burden, when, at last, it will be all found to be gems and diadems, and all to be thine own? See what the Apostle saith, 2 Cor. iv. 17: "Our light affliction, which is but for a moment, worketh for us a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory." Methinks, this consideration alone should be so effectual to teach us patience, that we should scarce have patience to hear any more. Shall our glory superabound, as our sorrows have abounded? Shall our eternal refreshings be measured out unto us, by the cup of afflictions of which we have here drank? Doth God beat and hammer us, only that he may make us vessels of honor? Shall all sorrow and sighing fly away, and everlasting and immeasurable joy be upon our heads? Wherefore, then, oh Christian! these impatient complaints, these fretful vexations? Dost thou do well to be angry? To fume and fret because God takes the course to make thee too glorious? Art thou likely to be happier than thou wouldst be? Or, doth God do thee an injury, to fit thee for a higher place in heaven, than, perhaps, thou carest to possess? Believe it, thou art the greatest enemy to thyself: and, if thou wouldst have thy good things here, thou dischargest God from his obligation: thy impatience can free thee from no other

weight but one, and that is, the exceeding and eternal weight of glory.

Thus, therefore, if we consider the great benefits and advantages, that will accrue to us by a patient bearing of afflictions; that it is exercise to our graces, physic to our souls, an evidence of our adoption, and an addition to our future glory; we should soon be convinced, that it is much more our interest to be patient, than it is, not to be afflicted.

5. Another motive may be this: that *a patient bearing of afflictions is a very great honor, both to ourselves, and to God.*

(1) To ourselves.

Consult 1 Pet. iv. 14: "If ye be reproached for the name of Christ, happy are ye; for the Spirit of glory and of God resteth upon you." It is for the honor of your faith, and hope, and all the rest of your graces, 1 Pet. i. 7: "that the trial of your faith, which is more precious than gold.....though it be tried with fire, might be found unto praise and honor, and glory." There is nothing more honorable than fortitude and magnanimity. Now, it is the heroic gallantry of a Christian spirit, not to be baffled by afflictions: but, when his body or estate are broken by them; yet to keep his soul sound and entire, and, in the greatest agonies of sorrows from God, with an undaunted meekness, to say, "Strike, Lord, for thy servant beareth:" and, in the greatest rage of persecutions from men, to scorn their weak attempts, and show a courage able to endure far more than they are able to inflict. Thus the primitive Christians tormented their tormentors; and, by their conquering patience, turned their despite against themselves, to gnaw and fret their own bowels.

(2) It brings in a great revenue of glory unto God.

For what can reflect a greater honor upon God, than that, though we suffer from him or for him, yet we can bear it patiently, because it is his hand that inflicts it? Cassian relates a story to this purpose: that a Christian, being injured and tormented by the heathens and afterward cast into prison, being asked by one, what miracles Christ had ever wrought, answered him, "The same that you now see, viz., that though I have been thus ill-handled by you, yet I am not moved by it." When the devil had obtained of God to afflict Job, who would be sure to do it with all the spite and malice of hell, and yet could not alter the resolution of his patience and constancy; see, how God upbraids the devil, and glories in his servant's fortitude; Job ii. 3: "Hast thou considered my servant Job, that there is none like him in all the earth, a

perfect and upright man; one, that feareth God, and escheweth evil? and still he holdeth fast his integrity, although thou movedst me against him, to destroy him without cause." God, as it were, pawns and engages his honor upon the patience of his servants: he calls forth his champions to the combat; and sets men and devils against them: if they flinch, his honor suffers for it; but if they keep their ground, and, whatsoever troubles and trials befall them, maintain the temper and constancy of an even sedate soul, this erects a lasting trophy to the glory of God; when they see so much excellence in God and in his ways, that they can prefer piety, with all the afflictions and tribulations that attend it, before the pomp and allurements of this present world, and esteem the very "reproach of Christ greater riches than all the treasures of Egypt," Heb. xi. 26. And, therefore, oh Christians! if you would glorify God, maintain your spirits in patience under all adversities: for this shows your most high esteem and veneration of him; when you can cleave to him as your chief good, though he bring evil upon you; and resolve to trust in him, though he slay you. This will shame and defeat the devil; when he sees himself so hated and rejected, though he bring all the baits of pleasure and advantage to recommend his temptations; and God and godliness so esteemed and loved, though they expose their followers to much distress and misery. And, indeed, this way of glorifying God, by patient suffering, is a privilege and advantage, that we have above the angels: the good angels glorify God, by doing his will; but they cannot suffer: and the evil angels, indeed, suffer; but they cannot suffer patiently. Herein we outstrip them: since, by nature, we are made passive; and, by grace, patient.

6. Consider, that *patience under afflictions is the best way to be freed from afflictions*. And that, whether they be immediately from men, or from God.

(1) If they be immediately from men; patience is of such a sweet winning nature, that, unless they have quite divested themselves of humanity, they cannot long persevere in a causeless wronging of those, who quietly bear and pass by their former injuries.

"Veterem ferendo injuriam, vites novam," was the old saying: "By putting up with old wrongs, you will not so much invite, as avoid, new ones." "Where no wood is, the fire goeth out," saith Solomon. Patience subtracts and withdraws fuel from wrath: it finds no new occasion to stir up strife by opposition. Whereas, if there happen a controversy and difference between two impatient men, it is but like clapping the burning ends of two fire-

brands together: they mutually help to inflame one another, till, it may be, both are consumed: and, while the one doth the wrong and the other retaliates it, they both think they have just cause to keep up an immortal feud. Certainly, nothing sooner damps an injury, than yielding; as a woollack will sooner damp and deaden a bullet, than a stone wall. Resistance gives, if not a right, yet a pretense and color to farther injuries: for those, who did the first, will think themselves as much affronted by our revenge, as we did by the first wrong; and so both are mutually exasperated, and there can be no end of violence and outrage. Whereas, a patient, meek-spirited man, who passeth by many provocations that are given him, presently cuts off the long genealogy and succession of wrongs; and finds it much easier to endure some without revenge, than to draw upon himself a great many by revenging them. This sweet temper of spirit, which the Gospel so highly recommends, must needs, at length, win upon our adversaries to forbear their unjust prosecutions; and to cease harming us, when they see us innocent, and followers of that which is good: this effect it will have upon them, if they be not altogether fierce and brutish; or, if they be, it will prevail with God to restrain their malice, and to take us, as his clients, under his own protection.

(2) If our sufferings be immediately from God, a patient bearing of them will the sooner put a period to them; because, usually, one great end why God doth afflict us, is to teach us patience.

And, therefore, the sooner we learn this hard lesson, the sooner we make the affliction needless; and God will not chastise any, unless need be. His design is not to break, but only to bow and humble thee: and, when he hath effected this, he will soon withdraw his chastisements, and cast away his rod; it being a work altogether as displeasing and irksome to him, as it can be unto thee. Rev. iii. 10: "Because thou hast kept the word of my patience:" i. e., because thou hast been patient according to my word, "I also will keep thee from the hour of temptation, which shall come upon all the world, to try them that dwell upon the earth." Now, when you are under afflictions, what is it that you most passionately desire? Is it not, that God would take off his hand? That he would spare a little, and give some respite? That he would free you from your sorrows and sufferings? Believe it, the most infallible and direct method to obtain this, is, to bear the indignation of the Lord with a submissive patience; for then, commonly, the affliction is no longer useful, as having ob-

tained its end: but, while thou frettest and ragest against God's dispensations, know, that it is not for his honor to let thee go out of his hands; for such a temper will never be brought to acknowledge him in the deliverance, which will not submit to him in the affliction.

7. Consider, that *all thy sufferings in this life are, in themselves, tolerable*. They are but the infirmities of a man, which the spirit of a man may bear. For,

(1) They are only partial.

Thou art afflicted only in some few of thy concerns: never was any, in all: and yet all are alike subject to the same God, and to the same Providence. And, what! wilt thou murmur and repine, when thou sufferest only in one or two interests, when all the rest escape; whereas, thou mightest have suffered universally in every faculty of thy soul, and every member of thy body, and every thing that belongs unto thee?

(2) All thy afflictions and sufferings have a great mixture of mercy in them.

There is no one of us, but, if impatience did not blind him, might see much more cause for thankfulness in every estate, than for fretting and repining. The truth is, when we are under any affliction, we are generally troubled with a malicious kind of melancholy: we only dwell and pore upon the sad and dark occurrences of Providence; but never take notice of the more benign and bright ones. Our way, in this world, is like a walk under a row of trees, checkered with light and shade: and, because we cannot all along walk in the sunshine, we therefore perversely fix only upon the darker passages, and so lose all the comfort of our comforts. We are like froward children, who, if you take but one of their playthings from them, throw away all the rest in spite. Now, oh Christian! recollect thyself: consider how many mercies thou enjoyest with thy afflictions: yea, consider how much mercy is in thy afflictions; in that they are not so extreme and rigorous, as thy sins deserved, and could have prepared: they are such, as might easily enough be borne, didst not thou thyself magnify and aggravate them, by thy impatience. The truth is, men dress up their afflictions in a black, hideous shape; and then are frightened at what they themselves have made so formidable. For shame, then, never whine nor complain at God's dealings with thee; lest God, to punish thee for thy impatience and murmuring, under more gentle and easy afflictions, prepare such for thee, whose little finger shall be heavier than their loins,

and whereas, before, he chastised thee with rods, henceforth he chastise thee with scorpions.

8. Consider *how many thousands, in the world, are in a far worse condition than yourselves; and would account themselves happy, were they in your circumstances.*

And how unreasonable, then, is it, to complain of God's dispensations! Do we think, that God is more indebted unto us, than he is to them? Or, that he wrongs us, if he doth not bestow more upon us, than upon all the world beside? Thou art, possibly, impatient at the loss of a child, or of some near relation: but how many are there in the world, to whom these are given, as the greatest crosses and burdens of their lives! Thou liest, perhaps, under racking and tormenting pains, or languishest under lingering and consuming diseases, and frettest thyself with impatience! though, possibly, thou mayst have all accommodations of means and attendance to ease and solace thee: but, canst thou find none that suffer the same pains, the same diseases, and, it may be, in a far more sharp and severe measure, and yet are destitute of all the other comforts thou enjoyest; and have nowhere to breathe out their sighs and their sorrows, but in the open air, or at the threshold of thy door? Certainly, were all the evils and miseries, that mankind endure, amassed together, and brought into one common stock and store, and then distributed by equal shares among all men, thy lot and thy portion of them would, perhaps, be much greater than now it is: and, therefore, it is very unjust and unreasonable for thee to complain, since God hath been more kind and more favorable to thee, than to thousands of others. But, the misery is, that pride and self-love make us always take our measures from those that are above us: and, if we see any more prosperous than ourselves, we presently murmur and quarrel at God's proceedings; and are apt to think that he deals rigidly with us, because he deals more favorably with some: whereas, were we humble enough to look below ourselves, we should, everywhere, find miserable objects; and see abundant cause to bless and praise God, that it is not with us, as with them. Art thou poor? Yet, even among that rank of men, are there none reduced to a more pinching and tyrannous necessity, than thyself? Look about thee in the world; and, I believe, there are few or none, that will read this, but may find some whom they can relieve, and are fit objects of their pity and charity. Art thou diseased, or tormented with pains? But canst thou find no Lazarus, no Job, in the world, in comparison with whom, thy

diseases themselves are health, and thy pains pleasure? Thou art not yet brought into that extremity, that a postherd or a dog's tongue should be thy only ease and comfort. Hast thou sustained losses in thy estate, or in thy relations? But canst thou find none, who can make thee such doleful complaints, and tell thee such sad stories of these things, as to make thee forget thine own sorrows, and mingle thy tears, not of impatience, but compassion, with theirs? Certainly, we have all of us abundant cause to be thankful to God, that we are not the most forlorn and wretched creatures in the world: for that very sovereignty and dominion of his, which hath made others so, might have allotted us the same portion. And, yet, these miserable creatures themselves have no reason for impatience, upon many accounts and considerations before mentioned; and how much less hast thou, whom, perhaps, they envy as happy and prosperous, whilst thou art still complaining, that thy condition is wretched and deplorable!

9. As another motive to patience, consider *of how short duration and continuance all the troubles and afflictions of this life are.*

Though your way be thorny and miry, yet it is but short. A few sighs more may bring you to heaven, where all sorrow and sighing shall flee away, and everlasting joy succeed these temporal miseries. Long afflictions are not beyond our sufferance. They must of necessity be light burdens, that a man carries far. Sore and heavy troubles usually give in bail to their own arrest: they spend, together with the subject that beareth them; and must, like fire, go out at last, for want of fuel. So that whatsoever your afflictions are, yet still, in the very nature of them, you may find ground enough for patience: if they be light and ordinary, it is but effeminacy and a weakness of spirit, to complain of what you may well support: if they be grievous and intolerable, a little time will serve to deliver you from the sense of them: and, as Antoninus said well, "That which is intolerable, is not durable: that which is lingering, is not intolerable:" thou mayst easily bear the one; and the other will soon wear out thee. And, what! cannot thy patience stand out one hard brunt; and endure a short shock, though it be fierce and violent? It is but a storm, that will quickly blow over: and thou mayst live to see serene and bright days again; if not in this world, yet then, when thou shalt be got above these clouds and this region of tempests, into that mansion of bliss and joy, where never sorrows nor sufferings durst appear. Indeed, impatience is a great prolonger of torment: it

is not our pain, but our impatience, that makes the time seem long and tedious to us: both sense and reason tell us, that the sun riseth over a sick man's bed as over the healthy and vigorous, and that the hours roll away as fast over the miserable as the prosperous; yet, how swift are our days spent in ease and pleasure! the hours seem to overtake, and to crowd one into another. And yet, certainly, thy sad and thy cheerful days have both one and the same measure: the shadow creeps as fast about the dial of a miserable man, as of the happy. The odds lies only within thyself. Impatience, fretfulness, repining, a raw and eager spirit, fond hopes and impotent desires, make short afflictions seem long, and long ones endless. But, were these cured, thou wouldst find it altogether unreasonable to complain of the length of thy afflictions; when yet they are whirled away and pass with the same fleetness, which makes others complain that their pleasures and their lives are too short.

However, here consider,

(1) Let thy afflictions be as grievous as thy passion can describe them, yet doth God afford thee no lucid intervals? Hast thou no intermission from thy sorrows? no breathing-space afforded thee?

This is mercy: and this time of thy ease and refreshment ought not to be reckoned into the suffering; as, commonly, it is. Indeed, men have got an art of making their sorrows longer than they are: ask one, who labors under a chronic distemper, how long he hath been troubled with it: straight he will tell you, for so many months, or for so many years: when yet, perhaps, the greater part of that time he enjoyed ease and freedom, between the returning periods of his disease. Certainly, the affliction can be no longer than it lies upon thee; and that, usually, is but a very inconsiderable time, compared to that, wherein God relieves and comforts thee. Job complains, that God brought his sorrows so thick and fast upon him, that he would not suffer him to take his breath: Job ix. 18: he was like a man shipwrecked in a tempest, where the surges and billows broke so fast upon him, that he had not time so much as to lift his head above water to take breath. But hath God dealt so with thee? Hast thou not had a morning, as well as an evening, to make up thy day? Though the clouds return again after the rain, and the same pain or disease, or whatsoever affliction it be, recurs; yet, it is mercy, that God hath interrupted the course of it; that he hath given thee an interval of ease: and, then, thou canst no more, with truth, say,

that thou hast so long had thy disease, than that thou hast had thy health.

(2) If thou hast been long under afflictions, yet, perhaps, they have been varied.

Even this is mercy, that he will not strike long upon one place, nor scourge thee where thou art sore already. But, suppose,

(3) The affliction, that God brings upon thee, were to continue as long as thy life itself continues, without either change or intermission; yet, consider, that it is most unreasonable to complain of thy sorrows, as long, when thou art still complaining of thy life, as short.

If thou art not relieved sooner, yet it cannot be long ere death will put an end to thy temporal miseries; and the last sigh and groan thou shalt give, will be that, which shall discharge thy soul from thy body, and thee from all thy present sorrows and sufferings. And, therefore, though the days of thy pilgrimage be evil, yet, since they are but few, this may recompense for the other, and persuade thee to bear patiently, what thou art not to bear long. Think with thyself, "It is but a few days or a few years more, that I shall be in a suffering, in an afflicted condition. I am traveling through a vale of miseries, but my grave is within view: there I shall throw down all this load of care and trouble; and sweetly take a profound rest, where none of the vexations of this life shall ever disturb me: 'There the weary be at rest:' and, what! shall I faint under my burdens, when I am to bear them but so short a time? Take courage, oh soul! that happy hour is hastening on, as fast as the wings of time can speed it, which shall give ease to thy pain, and rest to thy weariness. Death will shortly come in to thy relief, take off thy load, and lay thee to sleep in thy grave."

(4) All our troubles and afflictions are infinitely short, and nothing, in comparison with eternity.

If, at any time, the greatness, and soreness, and long continuance of them tempt thee to impatience, cast but thine eye upon eternity, and they will all so shrink and vanish under that comparison, that they will scarce deserve the name of afflictions. This great ball of earth on which we live, if we consider it in its own dimensions, how huge a mass and globe is it! yet, if compared to the vast expanse of the heavens, it is but a small, invisible point; and bears no more proportion to it, than one poor drop of water to the whole ocean. And, so, take all the long flow of time, from the creation of the world to this present moment, and we reckon it by

hundreds and thousands of years: it seems to us a mighty while: but, then, lay all this time, which is stretched out thus long, lay it to eternity, and it presently shrinks up to nothing: it is lost and swallowed up in that bottomless gulf. Yea, the smallest drop of water is infinitely more considerable to the great ocean, than thousands of years, though they should be multiplied again by thousands of thousands, are to an eternal duration.

Thou, therefore, who complainest of thy long and endless troubles, consider, that these take up but a very small and inconsiderable part of thy life. Most of thy days have been crowned with mercy, and God's candle hath shone upon thy tabernacle almost as often as the sun. Consider, that thy life takes up but a very small and inconsiderable part of time. It is but like a little pattern cut thee off from the great piece. And, consider also, that time itself, though it should be stretched out to as many ages as there have been minutes in it, yet bears no proportion to eternity. And art thou not ashamed, then, to complain of the length and continuance of thy afflictions, since they are as nothing, in comparison with the rest of thy life; and thy life itself nothing, in comparison with the rest of time; and time itself nothing, in comparison with eternity? Certainly, could our meditations dwell more upon that eternal state that awaits us, either of joy unspeakable or of insufferable woe and torments, the consideration of this would enable us to bear our present short afflictions with a heroic and generous patience; and we should scorn to think them either long or grievous. For,

1st. What is it for us to suffer a few short days, when we consider the bitter and the eternal torments, that thousands of wretched creatures suffer in hell?

Look but into that great chamber of woe; observe all the instruments and engines of torture that are there prepared, which God will use against them with his greatest skill and his almighty power: "Their worm dieth not, and their fire is not quenched:" they have no rest day nor night, but the smoke of their furnace ascends forever and ever: and, when they have felt more exquisite and racking tortures than you can now fancy, for millions of millions of years, yet still it is but the beginning of their sorrows; still it is as far to the bottom of eternity, as it was the very first moment. These, indeed, are sufferings that might well make a man impatient: but, for you to vex, and fret, and be impatient, whose sufferings are but for a few days or hours, who have so many mercies and comforts mingled with all your afflictions, it

shows a weak, sordid, low spirit; for you to be impatient under those little crosses that God lays upon you here, whereas he might righteously have plunged you into hell, and there have given you cause indeed to roar, and howl, and toss in eternal flames and never-ceasing woes, it argues a base, disingenuous, and ungrateful spirit. And,

2dly. What is it for us to suffer a few short days, when we consider that everlasting bliss and joy, which is prepared for us in heaven?

The happiness of heaven may well comfort us, in respect of all our miseries here upon earth. What saith the Apostle, Rom. viii. 18? "I reckon, that the sufferings of this present time are not worthy to be compared with the glory which shall be revealed in us." Christians! think but seriously with yourselves, that, though your way be rugged and tiresome, yet it is a way that leads unto your Father's house: and, though you come there all wet and weary, wet with your tears and wearied with your burdens; yet there you shall be surely welcome, and enjoy an eternity of rest: there, you shall sit down; and, with everlasting joy recount to your brethren, a whole ring of surrounding saints, all the wonderful methods of Divine providence, which brought you thither; and, with infinite satisfaction, see the necessity and mercy of those afflictions which you have here endured: there, your garments of heaviness shall be changed into garments of praise, and your crown of thorns into a crown of glory: there, you shall forever rest your tired souls in the bosom of Jesus Christ; and forever enjoy so great a felicity, that it were infinitely worth suffering all the miseries and afflictions which this life can bear, to have but one momentary taste and relish of it. Didst thou know what the glory of heaven is, thou wouldst be content to lie upon the rack, to endure the sharpest paroxysms of the most torturing and cruel pains all thy life long, and account them easy and short, if these could purchase for thee one hour's enjoyment of the ineffable glory and happiness of heaven. And, wilt thou then be fretful and impatient under thy present sufferings, when these are prepared to be the inlet into thy eternal reward? When thou shalt be forever confirmed in the possession of all good? When thou shalt never more be in a possibility of suffering; nor know, what a sad thought, or a sad moment, means? And, canst thou think any affliction long, when thou thus reflectest upon the everlasting recompense that shall be made thee? Certainly, did we more dwell upon the thoughts and meditations of eternity, we should not be so irrational,

as to judge that long, which takes up but a very little part of that time, which, of itself, is nothing, compared to an eternal duration.

(5) Consider, again, what brief measures the Scripture gives us, of our temporal afflictions.

It is called a *season*: 1 Pet. i. 6: "Now, for a season, if need be, ye are in heaviness:" and seasons, you know, are of no long continuance, but have their periods and revolutions. Yea, to cut it shorter yet, the Scripture calls it a *day* of adversity: Prov. xxiv. 10; "If thou faint in the day of adversity, thy strength is small:" small, indeed, if it cannot weather out one bad day! and so, likewise, a *night* of weeping: Ps. xxx. 5; "weeping may endure for a night, but joy cometh in the morning." Nay, if this yet seem too long to our impatient and fretful spirits, the Scripture still shortens it, and calls it but the *hour* of temptation: Rev. iii. 10; "I will keep thee from the hour of temptation:" and, shall not our patience be able to endure an hour's affliction? Or, would you desire it shorter yet? See it then contracted into a *moment*: 2 Cor. iv. 17; "Our light affliction, which is but for a moment." And what is a moment, but an indivisible point of time, that hath no parts nor succession in it; a mere twinkle of time? Countless numbers of them are gone, while we are speaking the word, moment. And, yet, all these afflictions, of which thou so grievously complainest, are light for their burden, and momentary for their duration, if that can be called a duration: these light afflictions, which are but for a moment. As one of the martyrs said, "It is but winking, and I shall be in heaven." So, truly, these short afflictions are past and gone in the glance, in the twinkling of an eye. Let us, then, be persuaded to bear them with patience. It is much below the spirit of a man, to murmur and complain of that, of which a little time will ease him; and much more, of a Christian. If thou canst not bear a season, a day, or night of affliction, an hour, a moment of affliction; wherefore art thou a Christian? Hast thou hope only in this life? If so, reckon thyself among the number of those whose portion is only in this life: but, if thou wilt own the name of a Christian, thou oughtest to enlarge thyself infinitely beyond this present time: thou oughtest to take eternity into thy life: and not to account that thy life, which thou leadest here upon earth; but that, which thou livest by faith, and expectest with a cheerful hope, the everlasting life of glory and happiness in heaven. And, what is it to this life of thine, what thou sufferest here? Do poverty, disgrace, pains, and diseases, losses, and crosses; do these reach into eternity? Or, do they at all taint that better life, which thou livest? This

here is not thy life. As we reckon not the age of children, from the time they have been conceived in the womb, but from the time of their birth: so, truly, this present life is but the conception of a Christian. In this world, we are but in the womb: then we begin to live, when we are brought forth into the clear light of heaven, and breathe the air of eternity: and, therefore, the day, on which martyrs suffered, was called their birth-day. And, if any sorrows and afflictions could reach thither, thou hadst some reason to be impatient: but none at all, for these transitory troubles which quickly pass away with our days; and for which, thou wilt in heaven be no more concerned, than now thou art, for the pains and inconveniences which thou feltest in the womb, before thou wert born.

10. The tenth and last motive to patience, which ought to be very effectual with all true Christians, shall be taken from *the example of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ*.

The Apostle commands us, Heb. xii. 2-4, to "look unto Jesus:" and to "consider him, that endured such contradiction of sinners against himself, lest ye be wearied, and faint in your minds;" and, again, 1 Pet. ii. 21, we are told, that "Christ suffered for us; leaving us an example, that ye should follow the steps" of his patience and submission. And, certainly, he is so great an example of patience, that, when we consider the indignities which he endured, and the infinite meekness with which he bore them, it may well shame us out of our fretfulness and impatience.

And there are two considerations, which do mightily enhance this, and tend to make it a most prevalent and effectual motive to arm us with meekness and patience.

(1) Consider, that his sufferings were infinitely greater, than any that we can possibly undergo.

From his manger to his cross, we find his way strewed all along with miseries. Born of a poor and suspected mother; acquainted with all the hardships of a mean and laborious life; his doctrine reproached to be blasphemy, and his miracles to be sorcery; having no shelter, no sustenance, not so much as the little conveniences of birds and foxes: he conflicts with his Father's wrath, till it strained his soul into an agony; and the apprehensions of that bitter cup, presented to him, squeezed drops of clotted blood from him. We see him exposed to the insulting scoffs of barbarous ruffians;

greatest scene of grief and miseries, that ever was represented to the world. "He was oppressed, and he was afflicted; yet he opened not his mouth: he is brought as a lamb to the slaughter, and as a sheep before her shearers is dumb, so he openeth not his mouth." Isa. liii. 7.

(2) Consider, that all his unknown sufferings were not for his own, but for our offences.

It is some motive to patience, when we suffer the effects of our own deserts. So thought the penitent thief, when he checked the blasphemous reproaches of his fellow-offender; Luke xxiii. 40: "Dost not thou fear God, seeing thou art in the same condemnation? And we, indeed, justly; for we receive the due reward of our deeds: but this man hath done nothing amiss." There was no iniquity in him, neither was guile found in his mouth: yet, notwithstanding his infinite purity and innocence, notwithstanding that all his actions were pleasing to God and beneficial to man; yet, he suffers all the wrath that the one, and indignities that the other, could load him with. And, what! do we find his passions raging? Doth he murmur against God, or meditate revenge against men? No; we find him meekly resigning his will to his Father's: not mine, but thy will be done: and, under all the rage and affronts of men, he pours out his prayer, together with his blood for them: "Father, forgive them; for they know not what they do." Now, oh Christians! imitate this pattern of your blessed Saviour: let it powerfully persuade you to patience and submission, under all your sufferings. Ours are all but the least desert of our own sins: his were only the desert of ours. Ours are only some sprinklings of that cup, the very bottom and dregs of which he drank off! and shall we be any longer impatient against God, or revengeful against men? Shall we fret, and fume, and be exasperated, and fly out into all the extremities of passion and violence, when our Lord Christ himself, the infinitely holy and glorious God, calmly endured such pains, such shame, such wrath, that the very utmost we can suffer in this life is scarce a fit shadow and resemblance of them?

And thus we see this exhortation of the Apostle pressed upon us, by these ten motives; which if we would bring under the view of our serious consideration, we shall find enough in them, to incline the most peevish and fretful nature to a meek and quiet submission to the hand and will of God. For, it is a most necessary grace for a Christian, in the whole conduct of his life, which is full of troubles and afflictions; and nothing can so alleviate them, as

patience: the author and inflicter of all thy sufferings is God, who is absolute in his sovereignty; our proprietor, as our Lord; infinitely gracious and merciful, as our Father; infinitely faithful to his word, whereby he hath promised; and infinitely wise and skillful, whereby he is able to work all things for our good and benefit. Again, if we consider what we have deserved, this will prevail with us patiently to bear what we feel: and consider the great benefits and advantages, that accrue to us by afflictions; as they are exercise to our graces, physic to our souls, evidences of our adoption, and additions to our future glory. Consider, again, the patient bearing of afflictions is a very great honor, both to ourselves and to God: it is, likewise, the best and readiest way to be freed from afflictions: that no affliction befalls us, but what is tolerable, and common to men; how many in the world are in a far worse condition than ourselves; and that all our afflictions are but short and momentary. And, lastly, consider the pattern and example of Christ's patience, which will powerfully sway us to patience under those sorrows we suffer, which are both less in themselves and more deserved by us.

ii. The next thing, in order, is, to show those distempers of spirit which are great HINDRANCES of patience; and give a very great advantage to every cross and trouble, to ruffle and discompose it. And, with these, I shall also connect and prescribe the CURES. And they are such as these.

1. *An effeminate softness and delicacy of spirit; when the mind is lax and fluid, and hath not its due consistency.*

We may observe some persons to be of such a nice constitution, that every alteration injures them. Let them but change their diet, or air, or set and accustomed hours, and they suffer grand inconvenience by it: whereas, others, that are more robust and vigorous, undergo these and greater changes, without change. And the like difference there is in the constitution of men's souls, as in their bodies: some are of such feeble and languishing spirits that they are utterly disordered by those accidents, which scarce move those that are of a more hardy temper. And these are, usually, men of very prone passions and affections, easily excited and set on work by every thing that occurs: so that it is a wonder to see how they are agitated by every small and trivial object which presents itself; like chaff or straw, that the least breath of wind whirls about: sometimes, they immoderately rejoice; sometimes, they tenderly commiserate; sometimes, they vex, and rage, and fly out

into all extremities of choler, at those petty circumstances that would not stir another, of a solid and masculine spirit. But these are men of too soft and tender a constitution. And, as a light stroke makes a deep wound upon a soft subject; so every light affliction enters deep, and cuts these men's souls to the very quick.

Now, to these let me recommend that admirable exhortation of the wise man, Prov. iii. 11, and urged by the Apostle, Heb. xii. 5: "My son, despise not thou the chastening of the Lord, nor faint when thou art rebuked of him." Here we have a most excellent temper set forth to us: as a mean, between stupidity and desponding impatience. We ought to be affected with the hand of God; and not to demean ourselves under afflictions, as though we felt no smart, neither valued what God doth against us, but rather defied him to do his worst. It is a sign of desperate incorrigibleness, when we are grown so callous; and are so far past feeling, as to despise the smart and correction of the rod. Moderate passions are allowed us; and God, when he afflicts us, would have us show ourselves to be men; not such brutish leviathans, as to laugh at the shaking of his spear, and to account his darts and arrows no more formidable than stubble. But then again, on the other hand, beware, that, as thou dost not despise, so thou dost not despond under the corrections of thy Heavenly Father. Fortify thy spirit, and arm it with all the arguments that are proper to encourage thee, in a suffering condition. Do not permit it to grow too tender; and, instead of being sensible, to be sore and fretful. Seneca expresses himself thus: "Not to *feel* our sufferings is inhuman; and not to *bear* them is unmanly."

(1) Consider how *unworthy* and *unbecoming* impatience is.

It sits ill upon a man, and renders him contemptible and ridiculous. We do never so much unman ourselves, as by peevishness and fretful humors. We degrade ourselves in the esteem of others, as a company of weak things, who must, like children, be humored to keep them quiet. Impatience always proceeds from weakness; and, while we toss and tumultuate and express the eagerness of an ulcerated mind, in all the intemperate language and actions that passion suggests, we are but a grief to some, a sport to others, and fall under the scorn and contempt of all. Let us think with ourselves how unseemly is the wild and extravagant fury of a distracted person! why, an impatient man is distracted; and, like such, he flings abroad, at random, firebrands, arrows, and death. And, therefore, our Saviour Christ exhorts us, Luke xxi. 19: "In your patience,

possess ye your souls;" intimating to us, that an impatient person hath lost the possession of himself: he is a man bereft of his reason; and, as we use to say, beside himself.

(2) Consider the *vanity* and *folly* of impatience.

To what purpose is it, that thou vexest and torturest thyself? Couldst thou ease or relieve thyself by it, this might be some plea and reasonable pretence. But, was it ever heard, that the body was cured of a fever, by putting the soul into one? Was it ever heard, that the disordering of a mind composed a man's estate? or, that raising a tempest within, should lay a tempest without? Nay, rather, impatience adds a mighty weight to our burdens, while we must bear both them and it too.

(3) Consider, that impatience is not only unseemly and foolish, *but it is unchristian too.*

There is nothing more directly contrary to the true spirit and genius of Christianity, than murmuring and repining: for, what is religion, what is Christianity, but only a due resignation of our wills unto the sovereign and holy will of God? Now, for us to vex and fret at the accomplishment of his will and purposes upon us, what else is this, but so far to renounce Christianity, to rebel against God, and to withdraw ourselves from under his dominion and jurisdiction? And, therefore, I beseech you, oh Christians! as you would approve yourselves to be such, that you would earnestly strive against that fond nicety and delicacy of spirit, which will, else, be a great snare unto you, and tempt you to usurp God's prerogative, and wickedly to invade his government: for, whosoever is not content with what God allots him, would willingly ravish from him his power and sovereignty, and set himself in the throne: he doth but tacitly upbraid God, that he wants either wisdom, or goodness, or both. And, therefore, confirm and harden your minds against all adversities that may befall you: fix your resolutions, that thus it ought to be, and that thus it is best for you: and, whatsoever portion God carves out to you, receive it with thankfulness: if it be prosperous, as your food; if adverse, as your physic.

2. Another great hindrance of patience, is *a fond love and admiration of these creature enjoyments.*

Indeed, were these things certain and durable, they would only be perpetual comforts to us: but we see, by every day's experience, that they are transitory, and mutable, and of no continuance: and therefore, when we eagerly set our hearts and affections upon them, to be sure, we shall, either in the loss of our enjoyments or the

disappointment of our hopes, find cause enough for grief, and temptations enough to impatience. Let the comforts we prize thus immoderately, be what they will, we shall find it a very difficult labor to keep ourselves from murmuring against God, when he is pleased to cross us in them: for all the passions of the soul take their measure from love: that is the master and leading affection: and, therefore, according to the ardor of your love, such will be your sorrow, and your anger, and the fretfulness of a discontented soul, when God takes away the object of your fond love from you. So it is said of Jonah, chap. iv. 6, that he "was exceeding glad of the gourd:" he mightily pleased himself in the shade and the shelter, that it afforded him: and, therefore, when God had prepared a worm to smite and wither it, you presently see what a violent and exorbitant passion he falls into: and, when God graciously condescended to expostulate with him, "Doest thou well to be angry for the gourd? Is this fit for thy reason, or religion, or profession, to be so transported for the fading of so small a thing, as this gourd, the mean offspring of the earth?" We see, that discontent and passion so blinded him, that he flies in the very face of God himself, and gives the Almighty the most saucy peremptory answer, that certainly ever proceeded out of the mouth of a good man: v. 9, he said, "I do well to be angry, even unto death;" alas, peevish man! that so little a matter, as the withering of a poor shrub or weed, should put him into so violent a passion! But, so it is, when we immoderately prize the enjoyment of any comfort on earth, we shall likewise immoderately bear the loss of it: when God comes to touch us there, all within us is presently in an uproar; we fret, and fume, and exclaim against men, and quarrel at Providence; accuse one, and revenge ourselves upon another; and, in the turbulence of our passion, can scarce abstain from God himself.

Now, to cure and remove this cause of impatience, let me beseech you to sit loosely to the things of this world. Let them not combine with your hearts; for, believe it, if once the soul and affections be glued to these earthly concernments, whenever God shall take them from you, it will be a violent tearing and rending of your very hearts, to part with them. Bring yourselves into a holy indifference to all things here below; and, then, whatsoever happens, nothing can fall out much amiss. If you have no vehement affections for the enjoyment of these things, you will have no violent passions stirring in you for their loss. If thou didst truly estimate what this world is, how vain, how empty and insig-

nificant, how vexatious and cumbersome, thou wouldst find abundant reason to conclude, that it is not much material, whether thou be high or low, rich or poor, persecuted or favored, despised or honored: for, all these things are but dreams; and, as dreams, they vanish and pass away. Our true interest lies not here, but in peace of conscience, serenity of mind, staid and sedate affections, a generous virtue, and a pious life; and if these were thy care, crosses and afflictions would be less thy troubles. Think with thyself, how momentary thy life is: thou wert but of yesterday, and mayst not be to-morrow: when it is stretched out to the uttermost, it is but a span long: and what needst thou, then, trouble and perplex thyself about so many concerns and such a multitude of affairs, and engage all the strength and vigor of thy affections about such vain things, that continue not, nor canst thou continue to use them? What need so much provision for so short a journey? Let us take the Apostle's direction, 1 Cor. vii. 29-31. "The time is short: it remaineth, therefore, that both they, that have wives, be as though they had none; and they, that weep, as though they wept not; and they, that rejoice, as though they rejoiced not; and they, that buy, as though they possessed not; and they, that use this world, as not abusing it: for the fashion of this world passeth away." And, certainly, could we but bring ourselves to this excellent indifference, we should not be much molested, nor grow fretful and impatient, for any losses or disappointments in things which we look upon as of no great concernment.

3. Another great hindrance to patience is, *pride and self-love*.

For, while we are fond of ourselves, we shall be shrewdly tempted to murmur at whatsoever crosses and thwarts our appetites or our interests. Those, that are great admirers of themselves, think that all things are due to them: and, if any thing fall out contrary to their expectations and overweening conceits, they presently judge themselves wronged; and storm and rage, as if their bitterest passions were but just resentments of the injury done them. Never was there a proud person in the world, but he was also impatient: for it is the very nature of pride, not to endure to be crossed; and those, who are inordinate lovers and admirers of themselves, must needs take it for a mighty injury, if all things go not according to their mind and will.

And there is a twofold pride, which is the cause and root of all our impatience: a natural and a spiritual pride.

(1) *A natural pride*. When we think ourselves eminent for

some natural gifts and endowments; and, thereupon, expect, that all others should say as we say, and do as we would have them: and, if any presume to do otherwise, we look upon ourselves as affronted, and cannot bear such a contumely; but presently burn in choler, and seek to wreak our revenge and spleen upon them. A proud man is his own idol, and his own idolater; and, as Nebuchadnezzar grew wroth and furious, hot as his fiery furnace seven times heated, when the three heroes refused to fall down and worship the image which he had set up; so these proud persons grow presently enraged, if all do not bow and fall down before them. If they meet with any so stubborn, as to thwart and oppose them, presently their Diana is despised; and all their passions are in an uproar and a tumult, to vindicate their honor. "Only by pride," saith the wise man, "cometh contention:" Prov. xiii. 10, and wherever contention is found, impatience is first the mother of it.

(2) There is a *spiritual pride*. And this spiritual pride may be, where yet there is a great deal of natural modesty and weakness. Now, this pride consists in having an unbroken and unhumbled heart for sin; when we have never been deeply affected with our guilt and vileness, and that most wretched and deplorable condition in which we all are. And, therefore, whensoever God afflicts such a proud person as this, he is apt to think himself punished beyond his desert; and to question and quarrel at the equity and justice of God, in bringing such heavy and sore sufferings upon him, who thinks himself a very innocent and righteous person. And this spiritual haughtiness and pride make him fret against God's dispensations; and make him think that God himself turns persecutor, when he afflicts him.

Thus you see, that all our impatience is from pride; whether our sufferings be immediately from man, or from God himself; for, proud flesh is very tender, and cannot endure the least touch.

Now, the only cure for this distemper of soul is self-denial and humility. That man is most secure from impatience, who entertains but mean and low thoughts of himself: for, what strong temptation can there be to any great excess of impatience, so long as we suffer only in that, which we do not highly value? Why should I vex or fret myself, that such a man speaks ill of me? Alas! he speaks not worse of me, than I speak and think of myself: shall I be discomposed, because he hath done me such an injury? Why I shall but gratify him by that means; and, perhaps, he did it with that very design: and, besides, he hath far

more injured himself than me, so long as I can keep my patience entire. Or, shall I murmur and repine, because God hath brought upon me such a calamity? Alas! this is a favor and mercy, in respect of what I have deserved at his hands: when I consider, what I have done against him, all that he hath done against me is nothing: my sins merit no less than eternal death and eternal damnation; and, certainly, I have no reason to complain, so long as I am out of hell: God were infinitely gracious and merciful to me, though he should redouble his strokes, multiply my sorrows, and increase my sufferings; and I were the most ungrateful wretch alive, if I should repine at bearing so little, when I have deserved so much. Thus, I say, humility, a contrite and broken frame of spirit, will preserve us from being fretful and impatient, whether we lie under injuries from men, or afflictions from God.

4. *Reflecting too much upon the instruments of our sufferings*, is oftentimes a mighty hindrance to the composure and patience of our spirits.

For this frequently puts a sting and aggravation into them, to think, that we suffer from such or such. And many will be ready to say, "This cross I could bear well enough: the affliction, though it be in itself heavy, yet is it supportable: but, when I consider the occasion of my sufferings, the unworthiness and baseness of those that have had a hand in it, this makes it intolerable; and, it wounds me to the very heart, that ever such and such a person should deal thus with me."

(1) And there are usually these three considerations, that grate upon our spirits, and make us impatient under sufferings.

[1] The *meanness* and contemptible *vileness* of the instrument.

What! to be affronted and abused by the lees and dregs of the people! If a lion had rent me, there had been some solace in the honor of my sufferings: but, to be eaten up with vermin, the ignominy of it is far worse than the pains. Thus, I say, impatience takes occasion to exasperate itself from the baseness of the instrument. And, truly, the most patient have much ado to keep their passions from souring upon this reflection. Thus, Job at large aggravates his miseries, from this consideration: Job xxx. 1, 8, 9: "They, that are younger than I, have me in derision: whose fathers I would have disdained to....set with the dogs of my flock....They were children of fools: yea, children of base men: they were viler than the earth. And now am I their song; and their by-word."

[2] It heightens impatience, when we reflect upon the *nearness* of those, who are the occasions and instruments of our sufferings

What! to have a part of ourselves, a parcel of our own bowels, rebel against us, and contrive our hurt and ruin! those, who have their beings from us, to conspire our destruction! or those, whom we have made intimate and familiar with us; and could never have had the advantage of doing us mischief, had not our friendship and kindness put them into the capacity! And, thus, David aggravates his sufferings: Ps. lv. 12, 13: "It was not an enemy, that reproached me: then could I have borne it: neither was it he, that hated me, that did magnify himself against me.... but it was thou, a man, mine equal, my guide, and mine acquaintance."

[3] It many times heightens impatience, to reflect upon the base *ingratitude* and foul *disingenuousness* of those, from whom we suffer.

Persons, perhaps, whom we have obliged, by the greatest respects imaginable: such, who, we thought, had as much reason to love us, as themselves; and would have been as far from doing us an injury, as their own natures. Yet, for such as these to violate all bonds of friendship, and all laws of gratitude; for such frozen snakes to fly at us, and sting us, whom we have warmed and cherished in our own bosoms, and who, without our support, could not have had the power to mischief us: this, saith impatience, makes the injury altogether insufferable; and the highest revenge, that I can take upon them, can scarce expiate it.

(2) But, to cure this fretful distemper of thy spirit, be sure that thou look off from the instruments of thy sufferings, unto God, who is the principal infliker of them. And, then, if thou wilt but consider the three foregoing reflections, thou wilt find, that thine own cannon will be turned against thee; and those, which were provocations to impatience, when thou lookest to men, will prove strong and most forcible arguments for patience, if thou lookest to God.

[1] Thou growest impatient, when thou lookest upon the meanness and baseness of those that injure thee: and, wilt thou not be patient, oh man! when thou considerest thine own vileness and baseness, who yet hast infinitely wronged and injured thy God?

Who, or what, art thou, but breathing dust, a lump of animated mire, the very sediment and dregs of nature? And, yet, how often hast thou daringly provoked and affronted the great and glorious God of heaven and earth! Every the least sin thou hast

committed, the least vain and unworthy thought, the least idle and impertinent word, is a far greater injury done to God, than the most unjust and violent outrage can be against thee. It is thy fellow-creature, that wrongs thee; one, whose nature and being is altogether as considerable as thine; and, in this respect, differs no more from thee, than two units, in a number, from one another: but thou sinnest against the Infinite Majesty of thy Almighty Creator; in comparison with whom, thou, and all nations of the earth, "are less than nothing and vanity;" more nothing, than nothing itself is. And, wilt not thou be patient under the petulant affronts of thy inferiors, when as thou, who art infinitely inferior unto God, yet livest, and art yet out of hell, only through his patience towards thee?

[2] Thou art impatient, when thou considerest the nearness of the relation, wherein those, that wrong thee, stand unto thee: but, wilt not thou rather be patient, when thou considerest, in what a near relation thou standest unto God, and yet ceasest not daily to affront and injure him?

Thou art his creature; and that is so near, as it challengeth from thee all possible respect and duty: nay, more; thou art his son, or at least hopest and pretendest so, and yet rebellest against thy Heavenly Father. And, is it much, that thine rebel against thee, since thou thyself rebellest against thine? And,

[3] Thou art impatient, when thou considerest the ingratitude of those, from whom thou sufferest: but, alas, oh man! dost thou never consider thine own towards God?

Is not thy whole dependence upon him? Doth not he maintain thee, at his own cost and charges? Hath he not educated, and brought thee up, as one of his family and household? Doth he not daily provide for thee? Doth he not heap his blessings upon thee, and load thee every day with his benefits? And yet, oh ungrateful man! thou art daily and hourly wronging and provoking him. And, therefore, if he doth at last chastise and afflict thee, thou hast no reason to murmur and complain: for, it seems, it is but thine own law: it is no otherwise, than thou wouldst thyself deal with thy fellow-creature, over whom thou hast no such right; and from whom thou hast not suffered, by infinite proportions, so much as thy God hath done from thee.

Thus, I say, by turning off our eyes from the instruments, to the principal cause of our sufferings, we may cure and remove that impatience, which is apt to grate upon and exasperate our spirits.

5. *Reflecting upon a former more prosperous condition*, is oftentimes a great provocation unto impatience under our present sufferings.

Nothing puts a sharper edge upon our afflictions, than to compare present miseries with past felicities. But, in this, we may see very much of the perverseness of our nature, in turning that, which ought to be an engagement to our thankfulness, into an occasion of murmuring. For, either thy former prosperity was a mercy, or not: if not, thou hast no cause to complain for the change: if it were, certainly, thou hast a reason rather to bless God, than to repine that he hath blessed the

And thus I have finished the consideration of those generals, which I propounded. I hope I need not press any thing more, than what hath already been offered. And, if the serious review of what arguments and motives have been mentioned, will not suffice to compose the mind, it is much to be doubted, whether such men's spirits be not ulcerous beyond all cure.

Only, let me add this for our encouragement, that this hard and difficult duty will be but for a little while incumbent upon us. Whatsoever is irksome in religion, will shortly be over: and, when we are passed through this vale of tears and misery, as our faith shall be turned into vision, our hope into fruition, so our patience shall be turned into joy and triumph.

This was the consideration, which St. Paul himself used, under all his sufferings; and shall be the subject of my next discourse.

DEATH DISARMED OF ITS STING.

II.

OF THE CONSIDERATION OF OUR FUTURE STATE AS THE BEST REMEDY AGAINST AFFLICTIONS.

While we look not at the things which are seen, but at the things which are not seen: for the things, which are seen, are temporal: but the things which are not seen, are eternal. 2 COR. iv. 18. .

THESE words are a strange paradox; and are brought in by the Apostle, to confirm a position, which, to most men, may seem as much a paradox as themselves.

In the preceding verses, he asserts afflictions to be advantageous, and losses beneficial; that we improve by our decays, and may reckon our sorrows and troubles to be our gain and interest.

And this he makes good to us, whether we consider grace or glory.

As to grace, he tells us, verse 16, "Though our outward man perish, yet the inward man is renewed day by day." As sharp and nipping winters do to the earth, so do afflictions to the heart: they mellow it, and make it fruitful. These goads in our sides, as troublesome as they are, yet serve to quicken us to our work, and make us mend our pace to heaven: for Christians are like clocks; the more weight is hung upon them, the faster they go.

And, then, as for glory, he tells us, in the verse immediately foregoing my text, that their afflictions do but work out this. The cross stands in the highway to the crown. It was by this, that our Lord himself obtained it; and he hath since ordained, that all his followers should pass the same way: "We must, through much tribulation, enter into the kingdom of God:" Acts xiv. 22. This is the pathway to heaven, which is strewed all along with thorns. And, though the Scripture asks, "Do men gather grapes of thorns?" yet, certainly, these thorns shall yield a plentiful and a pleasant vintage. Poverty, reproach, persecution, imprisonment, sickness, yea death itself, take whatsoever is most stern and most dreadful to human nature, though they may seem to be oppressing tyrants, yet they are, indeed, but faithful and laborious servants: they are working out glory for us: and if, in doing their work, they break

either our bodies or estates in pieces; yet, so long as out of that rubbish they work and mould a mass of glory, we may rest ourselves well satisfied in such an advantageous loss. This is an abundant encouragement to bear afflictions, not only with patience but with joy too: for, God having promised that all things shall work together for our good, it is the greatest folly in the world, to complain that the potion is not pleasant, which the skill of the great physician hath tempered for our health; and let us rest confidently assured of it, that as much as we wish our condition otherwise than it is, so much we wish it should be worse with us than it is.

But, yet, the frailty of human nature being such, that it is ready to sink under every burden which God lays upon it, it cannot have too many supports. The Apostle, therefore, not only assures them, that their afflictions work for their glory and happiness; but, moreover, makes a comparison, wherein he shows them, how infinitely their reward shall surpass their sufferings. And this comparison stands upon a twofold antithesis, or opposition of the one to the other. The afflictions, which they here endure, are but "light" afflictions; but the glory, which they shall receive hereafter, is "an exceeding weight." Το καὶ ὑπερβολὴν εἰς ὑπερβολὴν βαρὺς: an exceeding, excessive weight of glory. He labors, you see, to express it; and he expresseth it so great, as if he must again labor to bear it. Their crown of glory shall be so massy and ponderous, that it will be as much as the soul will be able to stand under it is a weight, a load of glory.

But then, again, he compares them in duration, as well as weight. Their afflictions are but short and momentary; but the glory, that shall be revealed, is durable and eternal: "Our light affliction, which is but for a moment, worketh for us a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory." Now, it is a very difficult thing to persuade wretched and miserable men, that their afflictions are but light and short. Every little pressure is a load, and every hour an age. We reckon our time by quite different measures, when we are in adversity, from those which we use when we are happy and prosperous. In prosperity, time plumes its wings, and flies away apace before us: life, we think, glides along too fast in a smooth and even way. But, when the way is rugged and miry, the hours then seem slow-paced and loitering: and, quite contrary to the course of nature, our summer and sun-shine days are the shortest, and our winter are the only long and tedious ones.

What, then, makes the Apostle here give in such a different account concerning afflictions, from that of other men? That, when they reckon the least and shortest to be long and heavy, he should here determine quite contrary, and assert the greatest to be but light and momentary? He satisfies us in the reason of this strange and paradoxical assertion, in the words of the text; and tells us, that we shall account all the afflictions of this life light and short, "while we look not at the things which are seen, but at the things which are not seen."

But this may seem to be no better, than to resolve a question by propounding a riddle. For, to "look at things not seen," to see things invisible, can appear no other than a perplexing riddle to most men, who live more by sense than they do by faith. I shall, therefore, first clear the words from the doubtfulness and ambiguity of the phrase: and then collect from them the principal subject, on which I intend to insist at present.

I. We have, IN THESE WORDS, the Apostle's practice, and the reason of it. HIS PRACTICE: "We look not at things seen, but at things not seen:" THE REASON, because "things seen are temporal, but things not seen are eternal."

Here let us briefly inquire, what is meant by *things seen*; what by *things not seen*; and, what, by *looking* both at the one and the other.

As for the other two expressions, that "things seen are temporal," but "things not seen are eternal;" I suppose them known to all who have but a notion of the difference of time from eternity. Briefly, the one have their original, continuance, and period, in the revolution of time, and are measured by days and years: the other never had beginning, or, at least, never shall have end; and so, are exempt, either one way or both, from the jurisdiction of time and change.

i. By THINGS SEEN, may be well understood, all sublunary occurrences, whether prosperous or adverse, good or evil. And these, not taken so restrainedly, as to be limited to our bodily sight, as if "things seen" should only be those objected to our eyes; but, more largely, whatsoever is any way sensible or present to us, that may be here reckoned among "things seen." For, because it is necessary to our corporeal sight, that objects be present; therefore, the Apostle expresseth things present by the notion of being seen. And, indeed, it bears the same latitude with that common expression of the wise man, "All things under the sun:"

all things under the sun being, as it were, illustrated by his light, may be said to be "things seen." But here, accommodating this expression to the drift of the Apostle in the context, we must take these "things seen," for the more severe occurrences of our lives; for the miseries, afflictions, and troubles we are exposed unto; for the dark and gloomy side of those objects, that are presented unto us: "Our light affliction.....worketh for us an exceeding.....weight of glory," while we look not at "things seen:" they conduce to our happiness, while we look not on the grim and direful aspect of our sufferings, so as to be frightened by them from our duty and obedience.

ii. Though THE THINGS WHICH ARE NOT SEEN, may be of several sorts; as things distant, things future, things spiritual, may all of them be unseen, and each of them may have several kinds under it: yet, here, according to the symmetry of the Apostle's discourse, are meant those future things, which constitute our final and everlasting estate; and they may be referred either to heaven or hell, to our glory or condemnation. These are "the things not seen," at which a true Christian looks. We look not at the visible enjoyments, the honors, profits, pleasures of this world; no, nor yet at the loss of all these: but at those things, which are of infinite and everlasting consequence; at the insufferable pains and torments of hell, with care how we may escape that condemnation; and at the infinite and endless joys of heaven, with earnest desires and suitable endeavors to obtain them.

iii. To LOOK AT these, denote not here any act of the sense; but, as often elsewhere in Scripture, of the understanding and affections. There is an eye of the soul, as well as of the body; and that is the understanding. Now, because, when we consider and ponder any object presented to our bodily eyes, we usually look intently upon it; therefore, also, when the understanding seriously regards those objects which are not visible by our bodily eyes, we may be said to look upon them.

So that the sense is: We regard not, we mind not the things which are seen; the world, nor any of its frowns or favors: our thoughts are pitched upon other objects; and fly a strain above and beyond this world; we regard that endless state that is to come, more than all those vain and empty things that lie before us. And, while we do so, we find a great deal of reason to ac-

count all our afflictions light and momentary, which short-sighted men, who pore only upon what is present, groan under, as long and burdensome. And it is, indeed, but reason, that we should thus overlook what is present, and fix our regard upon what is future. For present things are but temporal: once they were not: and, if they be good things, when God hath turned over a few more days and years, either they shall not be, or we shall not be here to enjoy them; or, if they be evil things, either they must shortly perish, or we must perish from under them: or, as Antoninus, the emperor, speaks well, *Το μὲν ἀφορητὸν ἐξαγεί, το δὲ χρονίζον φορητὸν*: "Whatsoever befalls us in this life, if it be intolerable, it cannot be lasting, and we shall soon fail under it; or, if it be lasting, it cannot be intolerable, but we may endure it." But, the things, which are future and not seen, are eternal: to that state we are all hasting, that is of perpetual duration; where woe and torments, or joy and bliss, shall have no end forever. And, therefore, it is but reasonable, rather to consider, how we shall be entertained there, than how we are used here.

And thus I have, as briefly as I well could, given the scope and meaning of the words.

II. From them, we may COLLECT two propositions.

i. That THE SERIOUS CONSIDERATION OF OUR FUTURE ETERNAL STATE WILL MAKE US OVERLOOK, AND, WITH A HOLY GENEROUSNESS, DESPISE ALL THE PRESENT TROUBLES AND AFFLICTIONS, WITH WHICH WE MEET IN THIS LIFE.

To despise them, I say, not indeed as they are "the chastenings of the Lord," for so we are forbidden it, Prov. iii. 11, but as they accidentally prove to be temptations to us, to desert the service of God, which exposeth us to the scorn and opposition of the world, to embrace the more profitable or creditable service of sin and the devil: to despise them so, as not to make any great reckoning, whether we be afflicted or no. And, thus to despise them, is the right means not to faint, when we are corrected. We see how this wrought upon the Apostle: Rom. viii. 18: "I reckon, that the sufferings of this present time are not worthy to be compared with the glory which shall be revealed in us." As the earth, if we consider it alone, in its own proper dimensions, appears to be of a vast circumference and magnitude; but, compare it to the larger circuit of the heavens, and then, in respect of their immeasurable expanse, this whole globe is but a small speck and indi-

visible point: so the Apostle institutes the comparison between temporal afflictions and eternal glory. Afflictions, indeed, to those who look no farther than upon their present sufferings, may appear great, and heavy, and endless; but, when we compare earth with heaven, the afflictions here with the glory hereafter, they are light, inconsiderable nothings. It is but as if a man should be troubled that he is hungry, when he is just sitting down to a feast; or, as if he should think much of it, that he must kneel to have an honor conferred upon him. Yea, our Apostle so compares present sufferings with future glory, that he plainly tells us, there is no comparison between them: they "are not worthy to be compared." But, I shall waive this, at present.

ii. The second proposition, that I collect from the text, is this, that THERE IS NOTHING WORTH THE REGARD OF A CHRISTIAN, BUT HIS ETERNAL STATE. We look not at things present, for they are but temporal; but at things future, for they are eternal.

In prosecuting this, I shall, first, lay down some demonstrations of the proposition; and, then, reflect upon the wretched temper of most men, who regard every thing but their souls and their eternal state. The demonstrations are briefly these:

1. This is *the end of our lives, to provide for our eternal state.*

There is a twofold great end of man: one, in respect to God; and that is, to promote his glory: the other, in respect to ourselves; and that is, to promote our own happiness. Upon these very designs bath God sent us into the world, that we might glorify him, and save our own souls: and he hath been graciously pleased so to intertwine these two together, that, in glorifying him, we do but glorify ourselves, and, in working for him, we do but work for our own interests and advantage. Yea, indeed, no man can glorify God, but he, who is careful and industrious to promote his own salvation and happiness: and, therefore, saith our Saviour, John xv. 8, "Herein is my Father glorified, that ye bear much fruit:" but, to whom is this fruit beneficial? Not to God, but to ourselves. The Apostle Paul speaks of such fruit, Phil. iv. 17: "Fruit that may abound to your account." This is that, which distinguishes the great end of man from that of beasts: they were all created, that they might, in their several kinds, honor and glorify God, as well as man; but they have no immortal part, as man hath, for whose everlasting happiness they should be obliged to provide. Self-preservation is the utmost natural end of all creatures; and such as their self is, such will be their endeavors to

preserve it. Brute creatures, whose self is only temporal, seek only their temporal preservation, as best accommodated to their natures and principles; but, in man, the self is immortal, eternal: and, therefore, unless our care be laid out about our eternal concerns, we fall far short of our end; and, in seeking the things of this world, we seek only a temporal preservation; that is, we infinitely degrade ourselves, and act only upon the principles and for the ends of brute beasts.

2. We ought chiefly to regard our eternal state, our everlasting happiness and welfare, because *this is the only thing, which our care can secure to us in this world.*

Nothing else can here be made sure, but our future inheritance of life and glory. We are not certain of any worldly comforts, which we enjoy in possession: much less are we certain of any in reversion. Change and vicissitudes are written in capital letters upon all things under the sun. There is no stability in any condition, here on earth. He, who stands highest, stands but upon ice: his footing is but uncertain, and his fall will be but the more desperate. But things eternal are sure in themselves; and they may be made sure to us: they are sure in themselves; and, therefore called by the Apostle, Heb. x. 34, "a better and an enduring substance:" and they may be made sure to us; as certain as the word of God is true, and the seal of his Spirit inviolable. A Christian is a man wholly made up of paradoxes: he is poor, and yet maketh many rich: he hath nothing, and yet possesseth all things; he is sorrowful, yet always rejoicing; 2 Cor. vi. 10. Things not seen, are the things at which he looks: and, contrary to the guise of other men, he is surest of the things, which he doth not see; and those, which he hath in his hands and in his sight, he accounts the most uncertain and deceitful. Again,

3. As nothing else can be made sure to us, besides our eternal state; so, indeed, *there is nothing else worth making sure, but only that:* and, therefore, a Christian's care about things eternal, is most rational and becoming.

If I could lay an arrest upon the mutability of affairs, and drive such a pin into the wheel of Providence as should keep it from turning: if I could give laws to fate, and prescribe to myself the measures of mine own prosperity: yet, alas! what great matter were all this, since, when we give in a true account of all these temporal things, which we call by so many names and set down so many items for, it amounts, in the sum, to no more but this, meat for the belly, and clothes for the back! Hunger and nakedness

are the only necessities of life : and, certainly, he, who takes care for more than will just supply these, than will serve to satisfy hunger and cover nakedness, he doth but take care for diseases or burdens. To what purpose is it, therefore, oh worldling ! that thou amassest together such heaps of riches ? For things that are necessary, so much needs not ; and, for things unnecessary, thou needest not them. I have read of a philosopher, who, passing through a well-stored market and casting his eyes upon the plenty and abundance of all sorts of provision that were there brought to be sold, blessed himself with this reflection : “ Oh ! ” saith he, “ how many things are there here, that I do not want ! ” Yea, those few things, which are barely necessary to life, yet are not worth our anxious and solicitous care : so our Saviour assures us, Matt. vi. 25 : “ I say unto you, take no care for your life, what ye shall eat, or what ye shall drink ; nor yet for your body, what ye shall put on. ” We should not be painfully anxious about food and raiment themselves ; these necessities of life, whether we have them or no, yet we shall not long want them : if they be denied to us, we shall, in a very short time, be in a condition, wherein we shall no more need such poor supplies ; where our life shall not be so feeble, as to need support from the staff of bread ; and where a coverlet of dust and worms will be as well as a royal robe. Of what worth are those things, over which death hath the dominion ? What will it be to any of us, one age hence, that we have been rich or great, or honorable ? That we have lived on the top of the world, and enjoyed all things in it at wish ? Certainly, our dust will know no heraldry : dead bones will keep no distance : all our prerogatives will be leveled in the grave ; and all those little differences which we put between ourselves and others, our style, our titles, and our names, will be all blotted in that dust that buries us. Why, then, should we be so vain, as to lay out our care, and our time, and our strength, upon those things, which can go no farther with us than to the brink of the grave, whereas the soul is to live infinite ages afterwards ? Life, should it reach to that which we call extreme old age, yet is it all but the childhood of man : and it is as great a folly to busy ourselves about the things which belong to temporal life, as it were to lay up the playthings of childhood to be the comfort and solace of age.

4. *Nothing in this world is truly satisfactory.*

And, therefore, there is great reason we should look beyond temporal things which are seen, unto things eternal which are not seen. Here, when our real wants are supplied, as indeed a very

little will suffice to do that, yet our craving desires are boundless, and will still torment us: but, in a blessed eternity, we shall neither want any thing which we should have, nor desire any thing but what we have.

5. *Eternity is an unchangeable state.*

There, is no repenting, nor amending of errors, nor recalling of mistakes. It will be too late then, to desire forgiveness or to hope for mercy. If these things be not now done in this world, alas! it will be forever too late, when once you are entered into an unchangeable condition. It is not so in earthly concernments: if, by imprudence, we have brought ourselves into any straits or difficulties, we may afterwards correct our miscarriages, and redeem ourselves from those inconveniencies. But our eternal state stands fixed and immutable, forever. Death delivers us over to judgment, in the same condition in which it finds us; and judgment delivers us up, either to glory or to condemnation, both unalterable. This life is the only time allotted us, to make provision for eternity. Every day, and hour, wears away a considerable part of our lives; yea, we are nearer to eternity, while we are speaking of this. We are all of us hastening to our last abode; and a few days will determine our everlasting condition. And, therefore, it principally concerns us, chiefly to mind how we may obtain that glory which is unalterable, and escape that damnation which will be remediless.

6. *Nothing, but what is eternal, can bear any proportion to the soul; and, therefore, nothing, besides that, is worth our regard.* Together with this last demonstration, I shall give you some reflections on the folly of most men, who regard every thing but their souls and their eternal state.

Indeed, were man only made up of dust and clay, were his constitution wholly material, temporal things might well suit so gross and sordid a composition. But there is in him a divine spark, an ethereal and spiritual substance, by which he is of kin to the angels, yea, and bears some resemblance of God himself: yea, indeed, it is not so much in him, as it is himself: the soul is the greatest and chief part of man: the body is but his garment, or his utensil. Now, nothing temporal is proportioned to this soul, which is immortal, and shall survive the death of the world, when heaven and earth and all things shall fall in their last funeral flames. And, oh! what will become of thy immortal soul, if thou hast laid up for thyself no better things than these, which thou canst never rake from out of the ashes of the universe, nor redeem

from the general consumption that God will bring upon them? Whosoever lies down on these, thinking here to take his rest, doth but, as the prophet speaks, stretch himself upon a bed that is too short for him, infinitely too short: the greater part of himself lies over and beyond these temporal things, and reaches as far as into eternity. And, yet, as short a date as the world itself bears, still it is more lasting than thy present life: death will soon snatch us from all these dear and precious vanities, upon which we set our hearts: they cannot go one step with us, beyond this present life: they, like the rest of our friends, may attend on us as far as the grave, but there must leave us. And, oh! what a sad parting hour will it be, when the soul must be hurried away into another world, and leave all its provisions behind in this, and have nothing to support, nothing to cherish it, to all eternity! Do but seriously consider, what a boundless and infinite state eternity is: it is a duration, that overwhelms all our thoughts; and, though they can, at one glance, pierce both earth and heaven, and make an axis to the world, yet, when we attempt to measure out the unwearied stretch of eternity, they grow giddy, and sink, and leave us nothing but confusion, disorder, and astonishment; when we have reckoned up all the ages that arithmetic can sum, yet, these are but the threshold to eternity; for it is a state, wherein ages, yea millions of ages, make no difference. Now, tell me, doth it not strike a chill horror through you to consider, that, within a few days, or, it may be, hours, you must enter upon that unalterable condition, wherein days, and years, and ages, are swallowed up as nothing, nor allowed to be so much as points of that duration? And is this incomprehensible eternity, to be either inconceivably glorious, or insufferably wretched and tormenting? And what! shall we, who may be in this very state, ere our breath returns to us again, or our pulses beat once more; shall we be so stupid, and brutish, as to be affected only with these present things which perish with the using, and neglect that state which is of eternal duration and infinite concernment? Certainly, one would think, that men had some very great business to do upon earth, that they can neither afford time nor thoughts about heaven and their eternal interests. Well, what are these mighty affairs, that so employ them? Why truly, poor, vile, vain trifles. Some are devising their pleasures, how they may melt away their days in luxury: others are scraping together muck and thick clay; others dangerously aspiring to dignity and honor: this is the great business and employment of the world; which, when I seriously reflect upon

it, seems to me as vain and sottish, as if a man, in a shipwreck, should only take care to preserve his clothes from wetting, when he himself is drowning. Vain men! death is at your heels; and, at its, judgment and eternity. Is it time for you to mind every trifle of this life; how to make a compliment or a visit, when you are just splitting against the rock of ages, and plunging into the lake of fire and brimstone? Is it time for you now to pursue your pleasures, when everlasting burnings are kindling upon you, and in which, unless you be here persuaded to embrace the severities of a holy life, you must forever wallow; forever, without ease or release? Is it time for thee to hoard up thy wealth, and to lay up goods for many years, when yet thou knowest not, whether God will not take away thy unprovided soul this very night? Death and eternity are coming upon us: we are all entering upon our everlasting state: and, if these temporal things be those, which we chiefly regard, they shall perish, and we perish together with them, forever.

III. Now, then, be EXHORTED.

i. NOT TO DELAY THY PREPARATION FOR ETERNITY, ONE DAY OR HOUR LONGER.

Depend not upon the warning of a sick-bed: God doth not always afford it; but, sometimes, doth execution before he shoots off a warning piece: and, why may it not be so with thee? Possibly, again, thy sickness may be such, as may render thee incapable of doing thy last good office for thy soul: however, I am sure, it is the unfittest time of all thy life, then to be making up thy accounts, when thou shouldst be giving them in; then to have thy evidences to clear, when thou shouldst produce them.

ii. If thou wouldst be prepared for eternity, LIVE EVERY DAY SO, AS IF EVERY DAY WERE THY DYING AND THY LAST DAY, AND THE VERY NEXT TO ETERNITY.

If it be not so, it is more than thou knowest. And, therefore, since we have no assurance of an hour or day longer, it is but reason and wisdom, to look upon every one as that which may be our last.

iii. BE CONSTANT IN THE EXERCISE OF A HOLY LIFE; and be always doing that, which thou wouldst be content Christ should find thee doing, when he comes to judge thee.

Think with thyself, if thou wert now upon thy sick-bed, and hadst received the sentence of death, and sawest thy friends stand mourning about thee ready to close up thine eyes in a long night, what would be thy thoughts, what thy discourses. Let the same seriousness of thoughts and discourses fill up every day of thy life: for thou knowest not, whether thou art not as near death, as those, whom their friends and physicians have given over.

iv. LABOR FOR AN ASSURED HOPE OF GLORY.

This will make thy passage into eternity lightsome and joyful.

When thou, and all things in the world, must take leave and part forever, then, to have the sense of the love of God, and our interest in Christ, and our title to eternal life, will sweetly bear up our hearts in a dying hour. These are things, which are as immortal as thy soul is, and will enter heaven with thee, and abide with thee to all eternity. Oh! whom will it not comfort, to think, that death will change his rill into a spring? That, though here our waters sometimes failed us, yet, in heaven, whither we are going, we shall bathe in an infinite ocean of delight, and shall lie at the breast of an ever-flowing fountain of life and sweetness? Whosoever hath but such an assurance as this, cannot but welcome death with embraces; and, while his soul struggles to unclasp itself and get loose from the body, cannot but, with holy panting and longing, say, "Come, Lord Jesus, come quickly."

So naturally does the consideration of our future eternal state, not only make us despise the afflictions of this life, but set us above the fears of death itself: which is to be the subject of my next discourse.

O Almighty God, who alone canst order the unruly wills and affections of sinful men; grant unto thy people, that they may love the thing which thou commandest, and desire that which thou dost promise; that so, among the sundry and manifold changes of the world, our hearts may surely there be fixed, where true joys are to be found; through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

DEATH DISARMED OF ITS STING.

III.

THE CHRISTIAN'S TRIUMPH OVER DEATH.

Oh death, where is thy sting? Oh grave, where is thy victory? The sting of death is sin, and the strength of sin is the law. 1 COR. xv. 55, 56.

IN this chapter, the Apostle largely insists upon that article of the Christian faith, which is so far above the reach and comprehension of reason, that even those, who were the professed masters of reason, the wise Athenians, among whom both learning and civility were in their highest elevation, yet could not abstain from railing abuses, when St. Paul preached of the resurrection unto them: Acts xvii. 18: "What will this babbler say?" and, "He seemeth to be a setter-forth of strange gods: because he preached unto them Jesus and the resurrection." So strange and uncouth a doctrine did this appear, that, as they thought he recommended Jesus to them for a new god; so they thought that this *anastasis*, or resurrection, was some new-invented goddess, that Paul himself worshiped, and whose votaries he would persuade them to be. Which, howsoever, had certainly been of a better rank, than many of that rabble of deities, which they owned and worshiped: for both Cicero and Clemens Alexandrinus testify of these learned Athenians, who rejected the resurrection as a strange and novel god, that they yet erected temples to contumely and impudence, diseases and ill-fortune: and it is pity, they should not always have the favor and presence of those deities. There was scarce any superstition so absurdly ridiculous, which these sages would not rather embrace, than the belief of a future resurrection; which they accounted a downright affront to the principles of reason and learning. They could not comprehend a possibility in the re-union of the separate soul and body; so contrary to their celebrated maxim, "a privatione ad habitum non datur regressus:" nor could they conceive, that dust, scattered to the four winds of heaven, and subjected to so many changes, and made the ingredients of so many other bodies, could ever be re-collected, and formed again into the same body to which it did originally belong.

But I shall have occasion presently to vindicate the possibility of the resurrection; and to demonstrate, that, though it may

be above the reach of reason to conceive, yet it is not beyond the reach of omnipotence to effect.

It is more pertinent, at present, to observe, that the Apostle draws a most firm and natural consequence from the belief of the resurrection, to fortify us against the dread of death. Doth the husbandman fear to commit his grain to the earth, because it must there die and rot, and lie buried under clods and dirt; whereas he knows, that all these changes tend only to make it afterwards sprout up more flourishing and verdant, with the greater beauty and increase? So it is, saith the Apostle, with the body: vv. 42, 43: "It is sown in corruption; it is raised in incorruption: it is sown in dishonor; it is raised in glory: it is sown in weakness; it is raised in power:" there our bodies lie hid under the deep furrows of the grave, suffering all the debasements of stench, worms, and putrefaction; but God, the great husbandman of the world, doth but sow us in the ground: we shall certainly sprout up again, and appear more beautiful and glorious. These ruins of our bodies shall be made a foundation for a more stately edifice: "This corruptible must put on incorruption, and this mortal must put on immortality:" v. 53.

Now, the certain hope and expectation of this blessed change quite disarms death, and leaves it without any venom or malignity against a believer. To what purpose is all that ghastly train which attends this king of terrors; diseases, pains, and languors? When they have done the utmost that they are able, they can but cast him to the earth, whence, Antæus like, he riseth again with redoubled vigor. God deals with us, as the Chinese do with their precious clay: he lays us long under ground, that we may be refined; and made fit to be vessels of honor prepared for our master's use. What a weak and impotent adversary is this, whose assaults are our advantage, and whose conquests prove his own overthrow!

And, upon this very consideration, the Apostle doth, in my text, insult over this contemptible enemy: "Oh death, where is thy sting? Oh grave, where is thy victory?"

Death is here represented to us as a venomous serpent; but such a one, as hath lost his sting: so that, though it may hiss against us, yet it cannot wound us.

Where is thy sting? That is, Where is that, which threatened to convey thy noxious and baneful poison into us? Where is that, which is thought so formidable, so destructive and pernicious, in death? And this very question intimates to us, that there is

nothing left of this venomous quality; that now, to a faithful servant of Christ, there is nothing deadly, no not in death itself. I remember, I have somewhere read of a kind of serpent whose poison is so very virulent and of such quick dispatch, that it doth immediately dissolve the body, and reduce it to dust.

This sting, and this venom in it, death doth indeed still retain, even against the best of men; and those, whom it smites, shall certainly crumble away into dust. This sting, therefore, still remains.

And, for its victories, the grave too can boast as many, as it hath trophies erected in the monuments, inscriptions, and scattered bones of those whom it hath slain. But, when omnipotence shall rally every loose and dispersed atom into its former station; when we shall become heavenly from earth, and deathless from death; we may justly, without fear, despise the injuries of death, and tread with triumph upon the earth that must bury us.

Observe, hence, That THE HOPE OF A BLESSED AND GLORIOUS RESURRECTION IS THE ONLY SUFFICIENT SECURITY AGAINST THE DREAD OF DEATH, AND A CHRISTIAN'S MOST GLORIOUS TRIUMPH OVER THE GRAVE.

In prosecuting this, I shall only treat of two things.

I. For the first, That ALL OTHER CONSIDERATIONS ARE TOO WEAK TO ENCOURAGE US; let us consider those fearful and horrid notions, that nature hath imprinted upon us against its enemy; how wan and dismal it represents his visage: so that, though there be nothing more certain, by the statute law of heaven, than that we must die; yet, withal, there is nothing more difficult, than to persuade men to die willingly.

The old philosophers and wise men of all ages have ransacked the whole magazine of reason; and have put into our hands all the weapons they could there find, which they thought might embolden us to encounter this dreadful enemy. But yet, as the Lord Verulam well observes, all their great preparations, instead of diminishing its dread, only served to make it appear the more fearful: all the cost and skill, which they bestowed upon their armor, made them but the richer prey to the victor; and only served to enhance the conquests of death, that could lay such rational and argumentative heads in the dust. And, indeed, whatsoever mere natural reason can put upon us, is rather for pomp

than use: more to embellish the mind, than to fortify the heart: for there is not any thing, which these grave moralists do, with so much ostentation and contempt of death, offer unto the world, that, if it be rationally scanned, can prove a solid ground for peace and comfort in a dying hour.

All, that they inculcate in their discourses on this sad theme, may be, I think, reduced to these three heads: either the necessity of dying; or, our freedom by it from the cares and troubles of this life; or, the hopes of a future reward. But none of these, so far as reason alone can discover it, will be a sufficient defense against the sting of death, nor gain the victory from the grave. For,

i. What relief is it, to tell us, that DEATH IS NECESSARY? That it is the common lot of all men? That every compounded being hath those fatal principles wreathed up in it, that will certainly work its dissolution; and that therefore it becomes the reason and the spirit of a man, to entertain that fate which is unavoidable, with a constancy which is unmovable?

This is frequently urged by heathen philosophers, in their preparations against the fear of death. "A wise man," saith Hierocles, "will not fret himself at necessity, nor look upon it as some strange unexpected accident: if that, which is mortal, die; and that, which is compounded of parts, fall asunder." But, alas! what comfort is all this; since that, which they bring for our support, is the very thing that frights us? It is the inevitableness of death, that makes it so exceeding terrible: it were not so dreadful, were it avoidable. And, therefore, to arm men against the fear of death, because it is the common lot of all, is, in my judgment, to as little purpose, as if, to comfort some pitiful wretch, they should bid him be of good cheer, for that he must necessarily be miserable and wretched.

ii. As for the FREEDOM, which they tell us death gives FROM THE CARES, SORROWS, AND TROUBLES OF THIS LIFE; that it is the safest and most secure refuge; the only port we can make, when we are beaten with the storms and tempests of the world: though they insist on it as a principal remedy against the fear of death; yet, if this be all, that we shall no longer suffer hunger, nor cold, nor pain, nor misery; that death is a universal cure for all diseases; that it alone removes the wants which life could not supply; all this will fall very short of being a sufficient encouragement to undergo that last arrest with a becoming temper.

For this, if there be no more, is but like the changing of a fever into a lethargy: and only brings us into a gloomy quiet; in which, as we have no sense of torment, so neither shall we have any of ease and comfort. And to be thus free from the burdens and pressures of life, will be no more a solace to us after death, than it was before we were born. And I am apt to think, that there are but very few, who would not be willing to compound for their beings with their troubles: like the weary traveler in the apologue, who sinking under his burden, cried for death to come and ease him; but when he beheld him appear so very grim and meager, asking sourly why he called for him, he meekly told him, that it was only to help him up with his load again. So, without doubt, it would fare with most men, if they had no farther hope than merely to be eased of the cares and sorrows of this life: they would rather wish to have them continue upon them to eternity, than to be eased of them at such a privative rate; since being is more dear, than sufferings are troublesome.

iii. What human reason alone can discover of a FUTURE REWARD, though it be infinitely mean and sordid, in comparison with those sublime and refined joys which God hath promised to us in his word; yet this, indeed, might be some antidote against the envenomed sting of death, and a support against the dread and terror of it, if reason could as well secure our right unto it, as make discovery of it.

But reason, even in heathens themselves, hath prepared a place of punishment, as well as of bliss; and the consciences of all men do, doubtless, discover unto them every day that guilt, for which their reason alone could never yet discover a sufficient expiation: so that, instead of arming us against the fears of death, reason, if we pursue it in its closest consequences, redoubles those terrors; and, by proving us transgressors of the natural law that God hath written in every man's heart, argues us all into torments. Hence we read of such strange lustrations, and horrid methods of expiating guilt; that, usually, they then committed the greatest crimes, when they thought to compensate for them, and their very religion was the most abominable part of their sins. If, therefore, mere reason can conclude, that there is a future state of happiness and misery to be proportioned out according to men's demerits, and their consciences tell them that their demerits are such as entitle them only to punishment; when they can find out no likely way of atonement for their guilt, this, instead of encouraging them

against the dread of death, must needs make the fear thereof more tormenting and killing, than if they were not at all conscious of any such future state. Besides, all, that our natural understanding can discover to be the reward of just actions, is only a partial bliss to crown the soul of man ; which, indeed, some sects of philosophers held to be immortal, and to survive the funerals of the body ; but none of them ever believed the resurrection of the flesh ; and so give up the one half of man to be lost and desperate. Now, who would not fear that dreadful stroke, that should quite cleave away one half of him, never to be recovered nor reunited ? Who would not fear to undergo that change, after which he must be no longer a man, but only exist a bare and naked soul ?

So that you see, all other considerations, which reason and philosophy can afford us, without the expectation of a glorious resurrection, cannot be a sufficient defense nor security to us against the fears of death : those things are rather flourishes of wit, than armor of proof : and that last encounter, in which we must all be engaged against that last enemy, will prove too rough and boisterous for the fineness of such formal arguments to make good. If men's consolations be no better than these : that death is necessary ; that, by it, they shall be freed from the cares and miseries of this life ; and, that their souls shall survive, but, whether in weal or woe, they are not well assured : if this be all, when they come to die, it will fare with them as with cunning fencers in the midst of a confused battle, they will soon be put by all their artificial play, and find that their postures and their wardings are all insignificant and useless.

Indeed, that, which alone can enable men to meet death with an undaunted boldness, must be something either much below human reason, as rashness and desperation ; or, else, something vastly above it, as divine grace and revelation ; and this, Christian religion only hath made known to the world : discovering a perfect expiation for sin, in the blood of the immaculate lamb, the eternal Son of God ; and, withal, giving us ample assurance, upon a pious and holy life, of attaining to a joyful and blessed resurrection, where the entire man shall eternally possess a full and entire happiness. By the former, it takes away the sting of death, which is sin by the latter, it recovers the victory from the grave, and throws down all its trophies ; letting those out to life and liberty, whom it detained as its captives and prisoners.

II. The second topic proposed is, to show you, WHAT THERE IS IN THE HOPES AND EXPECTATION OF THIS BLESSED RESURRECTION, THAT MAY EMBOLDEN US TO DESPISE DEATH AND TO TRIUMPH OVER THE GRAVE.

And, here, I shall not speak of the glory, that shall be conferred on the whole man, which is consequent to the resurrection: but confine myself to those advantages, which we shall have in the body only.

i. It shall be raised AN ENTIRE AND PERFECT BODY.

Not a particle of dust, not an atom, that is necessary to the integrity of it, shall be lost: and, though they be scattered up and down the world, and confusedly mixed with other beings; yet, by the omnipotence of God and the ministry of angels, every particle of dust shall be picked up again, and set in its due place and order. To this purpose Tertullian speaks well: *Si non integros suscitât Deus, non suscitât mortuos, etc.*: "If God doth not raise us up entire, he doth not raise the dead:" for, if any part of us be not raised, as to that we are still dead.

ii. As it shall be raised up entire and perfect, so EVERY MEMBER OF IT SHALL BE MADE SUCH, AS MAY BE MOST SUBSERVIENT TO THE SOUL, AND MOST CAPABLE OF THE RECEIPT OF GLORY.

We shall not find our bodies so restive nor so unwieldy, as too often here we do. They now hang upon us as heavy clogs, and depress us when we should be soaring to heaven. Then, we shall no longer need our Saviour's gracious excuse for our infirmities: Matt. xxvi. 41: "The spirit indeed is willing, but the flesh is weak." No; this flesh of ours, in that glorified estate, shall hold out in all the rapturous exercises of the soul: and, whereas now we are dull when we hear, and drowsy when we pray, and distracted when we meditate, soon tired out in any holy performances; then, when all these dregs and phlegm shall be purged from us, our bodies themselves shall be all light and fire, brisk and sparkling, ready to attend every the least motion of the soul, without reluctance and without weariness.

iii. Though the body shall be thus raised entire, and perfect in all its limbs, YET SHALL THEY NOT PERFORM ANY OF THOSE SORDID OFFICES TO WHICH NOW THEY SERVE.

They shall be discharged from their offices, as the same Tertulian speaks; but yet they shall not therefore cease to be necessary in the body: for, though they lose their offices, yet must they still retain their places; being reserved for the sentence of the righteous Judge.

We have thus discoursed upon the first of the two verses chosen as a theme of instruction, and have found therein the Christian's triumph over death and the grave, in the expectation of a blessed and glorious resurrection: "O death, where is thy sting? O grave, where is thy victory?" Shall our scattered dust and ashes be rallied again into the same body? Shall that, which was infirm, dishonorable, and mortal, be raised up powerful and active, bright and glorious, impassible as spirits and deathless as eternity? Shall we everlastingly survive our funerals? Shall we again receive these bodies out of the earth, purified from all earthy, dreggy mixtures and concretions? There can be no consequence more naturally drawn from these premises, than what our Apostle infers: to condemn death, as a feeble and impotent adversary; to trample upon this disarmed worm, without fear of hurt; and to disdain the weakness of its malice, whose greatest spite turns only to our inconceivable advantage.

I shall now proceed to treat of the second verse of my text, in which and the ensuing verse, the Apostle makes use of another medium to prove the same assertion, that, to a believer, there is nothing formidable or dreadful, even in death itself.

Now, because in this argument there are many ellipses, many propositions which are suppressed, and yet very necessary to be understood, before we can find out the full force of it; I shall endeavor briefly to unfold it, and show wherein the strength and sinews of the Apostle's reasoning consist.

The great truth, which he would prove, is, that a Christian may well triumph over death; and this he doth by two heads of arguments.

The one, drawn from the consideration of the exceeding great advantage and glory, which shall redound even to their very bodies, by the resurrection. And this he, at large, prosecutes, in a great part of this chapter; especially in verses 42-44: "It is sown in corruption: it is raised in incorruption. It is sown in dishonor: it is raised in glory. It is sown in weakness: it is raised in power. It is sown a natural body: it is raised a spiritual body."

The other head of arguments is that, which now lies before us

to be considered; which, if it be drawn out at length, contains in it many propositions.

First. That all the pernicious and baneful effects of death proceed from sin: which, therefore, is here called, "*the sting of death*:" because, as venomous creatures transmit their poison by their sting; so, likewise, that, which serves to convey into us all the mischief and harm that death can do us, is only sin. And, hence, it is well represented unto us, under that metaphorical expression of a sting.

Secondly. That, to believers, this sting is taken out of death, and the venom taken out of that sting. They may take this cold and frozen snake into their bosoms; and, though it hiss against them, yet it cannot wound them. As proof, he asserts,

Thirdly. That all the malignity, which sin contains in it, it receives from the law: "*the strength of sin is the law*." For it is the law only, that gives sin its being: for the Scripture gives us this definition of sin, that it "is the transgression of the law:" 1 John iii. 4: and expressly tells us, that "where no law is, there is no transgression." Rom. iv. 15. And it is the law, that gives sin its condemning power, by virtue of that threatening of death and eternal destruction, which God hath denounced against all that shall dare to violate and transgress it: "In the day that thou eatest thereof, thou shalt surely die:" Gen. ii. 17; and the "soul that sinneth, it shall die:" Ezek. xviii. 4. And, therefore, it necessarily followeth,

Fourthly. That, if the law, which gives power and malignity to sin, be abolished, we may then confidently triumph over death, whose sting, and all whose power, consists in sin. And,

Fifthly. The Apostle concludes, verse 57, that God hath given us the victory, through Christ; for he hath abrogated the law, so far as it gave strength to sin to condemn us. He hath taken away the damning and the cursing power of the law, by bearing its punishments, and being made a curse for us: "Thanks be to God, which giveth us the victory, through our Lord Jesus Christ."

So that the whole sum of the argument lies in this, that Christ hath taken away the sting of death, which is sin, because he hath abolished the law, whence sin received all its power and virulence.

These words offer to us these two propositions: (1) That there is a sting in death. (2) That this sting is sin.

But before I can treat of either of these, I must somewhat more

fully explain what is meant by that metaphor, the sting of death. It is an allusion to venomous and noxious creatures, whose power to do mischief lies in their stings: there, usually, lies the stock and treasure of their poison, which they diffuse into those, into whom they dart their stings; thereby inflaming their blood, corrupting the whole mass of their humors, causing inexpressible anguish and pains, and sometimes death and destruction itself. So that, because the sting is the instrument, which conveys so much pain and so much mischief; because it is that, which makes those creatures so formidable and dreadful unto us that are thus naturally armed: therefore the Apostle elegantly transfers this to death; and affirms, that there is something in death, that makes it terrible, painful, and destructive to us; and this he calls the sting of death. So that, in brief, whatsoever makes death frightful and grievous to us, that is this sting of death.

I. THERE IS A STING IN DEATH.

i. That there IS SUCH A STING IN DEATH, and that it is thus formidable and pernicious, appears from these following particulars.

1. *In the horrors of wicked and ungodly men, when they come to die.*

Indeed some, who, by long custom and continuance in sin, have utterly spent and wasted their consciences, go out of the world in a desperate stupidity; senseless of what they are, and careless of what they are like to be: and, with a mad rashness, daringly leap out of life, without ever considering how infinitely deep that dismal precipice is, down which they throw themselves; and that nothing is under them to receive them, but only the lake of fire and brimstone. But, take a man, who hath his sense about him and his reason awake, and who can exercise his consideration and reflection upon his present and future state; stand by the sick-bed of such an one, who hath worn out his life in the service of the devil, and whose luxury, riot, drunkenness, and uncleanness have been the only grand business of his life, and the diseases that these have brought upon him the causes of his death; what a sad scene of misery will be there represented to thee! how dreadfully doth he exclaim against himself! what tremblings, what outcries, what despair and blackness of horror then seize upon him, when death is haling and rending his soul out of his body! how doth he pull and struggle, and cannot yield to that, which, wretched creature, he cannot avoid! Certainly, death must needs be very terrible to

those, who have so soaked and softened themselves by sensuality, that its sting enters deep into them: and, as poison operates most banefully upon them, whose blood and spirits were before heated and inflamed; so, when death comes to diffuse its venom into those, who are set on fire and inflamed with lust and intemperance, the rage and pain, the horror and despair, that it will work in such, will be unspeakably hideous and dreadful.

2. It appears likewise, *in the unwillingness, even of the dearest of God's children, to undergo this last, rude, and violent shock of death.*

Yea, and though they have not only comfortable hopes and persuasions, but the clearest evidence and the fullest assurance, that Christ Jesus shall be unto them, both in life and death, inconceivable gain and advantage: yet, there is such an aversion in human nature itself against this last and dreadful enemy, that it startles at its approach; and would willingly be excused from entering into the lists, and engaging in that sore conflict. Who ever enjoyed a greater assurance than St. Paul; who was, even in his lifetime, caught up into the third heaven, and admitted as a spy into the heavenly Canaan, the land of promise; who there saw and tasted the ineffable glory and joy, which was prepared for him? And, though he knew the full fruition of them could not otherwise be obtained than by dying, yet he tells us, 2 Cor. v. 4: "We, that are in this tabernacle, do groan; being burdened: not for that we would be unclothed, but clothed upon, that mortality might be swallowed up of life." As we find a strong antipathy working in us, and nature itself recoiling, when we are to take some bitter potion, though we be well assured the effects of it will be salutary, and that it will conduce to our health afterwards: so, even in those who are fully assured that death will be to them an inlet into everlasting life and bliss, yet there is such a natural antipathy against it, that, though the consideration of that eternal happiness into which they are entering makes them submit to it with patience, yet they cannot but abhor and shrink from so bitter a medicine, even when it is tempered with the strong consolations of the Spirit of God.

3. To give the highest instance that can be of the dreadfulfulness of death, we find, *that even our Lord Jesus Christ himself*, in whom there were no disordered passions, no sinful fears, none of those weaknesses and follies which in us do too often serve only to increase and inhance the dreadfulfulness of death; yet even he *loathes and nauseates to drink of that cup*; and prays, with all fervency and importunity, that it might pass from him: Matt. xxvi. 39: "Oh

my Father, if it be possible, let this cup pass from me." And nothing, but his Father's will, was of power enough to reconcile him to it: nevertheless, "not as I will, but as thou wilt."

Certainly, that must needs be a very direful composition, which should make him, who was God as well as man, so averse from taking it: that must needs be a very formidable enemy, which should make him loth to conflict, though he were sure to conquer it; and not only restore life to himself, but to all the world. Indeed, that, which made this cup so exceeding bitter to our Lord Christ, was the wrath of God, and the curse of the law, that were tempered in it; but, yet, the very vehicle of these, death itself, and the separation of his body and soul, was in itself very unpleasant and irksome, even unto him whose person was divine and whose nature was innocent. And, therefore, it must needs be, that death hath in it a great deal of dread and terror.

ii. Let us next consider, WHAT THERE IS IN DEATH, THAT SHOULD MAKE IT THUS DREADFUL; that should make its sting so sharp and poignant, and cause such a natural abhorrence and antipathy against it in us.

And this I shall show, in five particulars.

1. *The harbingers, which go before it, to prepare its way.*

And these are, usually, languishing diseases, or racking pains; which, as the vanguard of a hostile army, commonly commit little less spoil than the whole body of it: these spend the strength and waste the comfort of life; and scarce leave any thing, besides a consumed carcase, for death to prey upon. And, must it not needs be terrible and irksome to nature, to conflict with these scouts of death? To be cast upon the bed of languishing; restlessly tossing to and fro in the night-season, watching for the morning; and, in the day, wishing for night, and finding no ease, no refreshment in either? When a fever shall burn us to ashes; a dropsy deluge us; and, it may be, with those floods which our own intemperance hath let in, quench the vital flame and lamp of our life? And, while we are struggling for life and gasping for breath, our assisting friends, with their officious mournings, increase, but cannot help our grief, by theirs.

2. Death is likewise dreadful, *as it deprives us of all the comforts and enjoyments of life.*

If God hath blessed thee with plenty and affluence of these temporal good things; if thou enjoyest riches, honor, friends, and whatsoever thy heart can here desire to make thy life sweet and

comfortable to thee; will it not grate upon thee, to think, that shortly all these must be sequestered? Thou must be torn from the embraces of thy dearest friends, degraded of thy titles, divested of thy robes, turned out of thy possessions, and must take up thy abode in the silent chambers of darkness and corruption. These are the things which make men loth to die. And, indeed, those, who have made them their treasures and their good things, will find it a very hard task, to be willing to leave all behind them at the mouth of the grave. They can wait upon thee no farther. And oh, what a sad parting hour will it be to the poor soul, when it must be compelled to remove into another world, and leave all its good things behind in this! how will it protract and linger! how loth will it be to enter upon so great a journey, and have nothing left to defray the charge of it! how wistly will it look back upon all those dear vanities, that it had hoarded up together! "What! cannot I carry this possession and those riches, this estate and that treasure, out of the world with me? Must we then part forever? Yes, oh soul, forever. None of these things canst thou carry with thee." And oh, think, what a sad thing it will be for thy poor soul to be set on shore in a vast and dismal eternity, all naked and destitute; having nothing of all the superfluities and abundance of comforts, which here it made its chief good, to relieve and support it!

Or, if men's estate be low and mean in the world, exposed to many wants and miseries: yet, even to such, death is terrible; nor can they be willingly brought to part with their share of enjoyments, though it be nothing but the common air, and dear light, and their own flattering hopes that yet they may live to possess more. For hope of better for the future, is a most tenacious thing: and those, who have nothing else to live upon, yet cannot look upon death with content; because, although it put an end and period to their present miseries, yet it likewise cuts off their hopes, in which, at least, they are as rich and as happy as the greatest.

3. Another thing, which is dreadful and stinging in death, is that, which truly and properly is death itself: I mean, *the separation of those dear companions, the soul and body.*

They are, in life, knit together by a mysterious bond of union and friendship. There is a most secret and powerful sympathy between them; and that, which is the very life of friendship, a communication of passions and affections. They have spent many

years together in perfect amity and concord; and, therefore, it may well be dreadful to think of parting at the last.

4. *The consideration of those dishonors and disgraces, which shall befall the body upon this separation*, is likewise very stinging and irksome unto nature.

There it must lie, a sad, wan, and ghastly spectacle to thy friends, and afterwards be lodged in the bed of silence and putrefaction. There, whole heaps of worms shall crawl upon thee and devour thee: and the next corpse, that wants room, may perhaps disturb thy bones, and not allow thee so much as the quiet of death, and the peaceable possession of thy grave. Thy few remains may lie scattered about the mouth of it: and thou, who art now respected and honored, mayst have thy only visible relics rudely and irreverently dealt with. And, certainly, there is in us all such a natural love to our bodies, that we, who think all our care and pains too little in pampering and indulging them, cannot but look upon death as a most dreadful enemy, that shall bring upon them so many contumelies and dishonors.

5. *The most sharp and stinging consideration of all is, that death delivers us over into eternity, which we have ten thousand times deserved should be infinitely wretched and miserable to us.*

Our consciences do misgive, and presage very dreadful things against us; and often represent to our view all the woes and plagues which are stored up in hell, the treasury and magazine of all plagues. And, though the former consideration render death very frightful; as it is inflicted upon us by pains and diseases; as it deprives us of all the comforts of life; as it is the separation of soul and body; as it leaves the body unto the dishonors and ghastly deformities of rottenness and putrefaction: yet, had death nothing in it more dreadful than these, it might be supportable. Yea, and we know that many, who have been borne up by the consolations of the Holy Spirit, have opened their arms to it and embraced it: though with natural reluctance, as it is death; yet, with joy and exultation, as it is to them an admission into eternal life. But, when death shall summon us to appear before the dreadful tribunal of God, and suggest to us horrid apprehensions of woe and torments unto which we shall by him be adjudged; this is that sting, which is most sharp and piercing; that sting, the poison of which affects the soul with most inexpressible anguish and agonies.

II. And this brings me to the second proposition, which is the very words of the text, THE STING OF DEATH IS SIN.

i. It was only sin, that BROUGHT DEATH INTO THE WORLD.

So the Apostle, expressly; Rom. v. 12: "By one man sin entered into the world, and death by sin; and so death passed upon all men, for that all have sinned." This serpent owes his being, as well as his sting and poison, unto man's transgression. Indeed, Adam was no more created immortal by nature, that he was impeccable: but as he had *potentiam non peccandi*, so he had likewise *potentiam non moriendi*; a power, neither to have sinned nor died; but might have prolonged his days, either to a happy eternity here upon earth, or to a blessed translation into heaven. But, as soon as sin had gotten possession of his soul, death lays in claim to his body; and sends a numerous train of grim attendants, fear, sadness, decays, troubles, pains, and diseases, to secure him from making his escape; and, by these, we must all, sooner or later, fall into his hands.

ii. DEATH RECEIVES ITS STING AND TERRORS FROM SIN.

It is the consciousness of sin and guilt, which makes death so bitter and intolerable to us: and therefore the Apostle, Heb. ii. 15, speaks of some, "who, through fear of death, were all their lifetime subject to bondage:" and this bondage of fear and terrors, under which they were held, was from the scorching apprehensions of that hell and everlasting wrath, which were to follow after death. And, though now, possibly, in the jollity of thy youth and health, thou puttest far from thee all such dreadful and disturbing thoughts; though, it may be, when conscience begins to recall them, thou desperately chokest it, either by the cares of the world, or intemperance, or by wicked and lewd company, or some such hellish artifice; yet, know for certain, that it will watch its advantages to return upon thee; and, it may be, represent all the horrors and dread of these things to thee, when thou art just entering into thy eternal state, to feel them. When our souls, in the very agonies of death, are just loosening themselves from those bands that tied them to the body, they will, doubtless, then make strange discoveries of those terrible things, which now, in our health, when we are in any degree serious, make our hearts ache and our consciences tremble. Then the terrors of them will be such, as will even cramp and confound our souls, when we shall see them all come rolling upon us, and no possibility left to escape or defer them.

Now, sinners are upon the very borders and confines of that region, where ghosts and spirits are the only inhabitants: here, a holy and just God is summoning them to his bar, and passing an irreversible doom upon them: there, they see hell casting up black and sooty flames, and thousands of wretched souls wallowing in them: all these dreadful things, conscience will represent to convinced sinners; and make them infinitely more dreadful, by suggesting, that they all make against them, and are the preparations of divine wrath and vengeance to punish them. Now, oh sinner! how canst thou encourage thyself? How wilt thou bear up thy heart against the thoughts and fears of death? Doth it not almost kill thee, only to think, that thou must die, and then have all the wrath of the great God executed upon thee, to eternity? Death is still waiting for the forfeiture of your lives; and, after death, hell and eternal torments; torments, which shall never have end or ease: under the sharpest tortures we can suffer here, we comfort ourselves, that they will shortly wear off; but, there, your tortures shall be most exquisite, and yet have no end. It is in vain to cry, as here we do, when we are under pains or diseases, "Would to God it were day!" or, "Would to God it were night!" for they have no rest day nor night, and none they can expect: but the smoke of their torments riseth up forever and ever. Thus, it is the apprehension of future wrath and vengeance, as the due desert of our sins, which makes death so exceedingly terrible and stinging to a guilty soul.

III. I shall close up all with three brief INFERENCES.

i. If sin and guilt be the sting of death, LET US BEWARE, THAT WE ADD NOT MORE POISON TO THIS STING, by adding more sins and iniquities to our past crimes.

Remember, every sin which thou committest will make thee more afraid to die. And, in what dreadful perplexities and agonies of soul wilt thou be, when thy guilt shall stare thee ruefully in the face, and thy conscience exclaim against thee! and, yet, inexorable death will wait no longer, but cut thee off in the midst of all thy fears and horrors, and thrust thee down to hell, there to undergo more than ever thou couldst fear or imagine.

ii. If sin be the sting of death, then certainly, THE ONLY WAY TO DISARM DEATH, IS, BY CLEANSING THYSELF FROM SIN.

Wash thy polluted soul, in the tears of an unfeigned repentance.

Sprinkle thy guilty conscience, with that "blood of sprinkling, that speaketh better things than that of Abel." Heb. xii. 24. Then mayst thou breathe out thy soul with comfort, when all that death can do unto thee, is, to change thy hopes into full fruition and enjoyment.

iii. HOW UNSPEAKABLY HAPPY ARE THOSE, TO WHOM THE STING OF DEATH IS TAKEN OUT BY THE DEATH OF CHRIST!

In his body, death struck his sting so deep, that he left and lost it there: and, like some venomous creatures, that die as soon as they have stung, *animamque in vulnere ponunt*, that mortally wound themselves, whenever they do less wound others; so, death, darting its whole sting into Jesus Christ, to wit, the sins of all the world that believe, which were all imputed unto him when he himself bare our sins in his own body on the tree, hath ever since been a harmless, disarmed thing; not able to hurt them, how grim soever its aspect be. Yea, this last enemy is reconciled unto them, and become one of their party; and they may, with triumph, say, as the Apostle doth, whether "life, or death, or things present, or things to come, all are" theirs: 1 Cor. iii. 22. Death shall do them the greatest and most real kindness which they can receive; for, as death was brought into the world by sin, so sin shall be abolished out of the world by death: yea, death itself shall abolish death; and bring us into that state, where our life shall be deathless and our holiness sinless.

And this brings me to speak of the resurrection, by which this victory over death is completed; which will, therefore, be the subject of the ensuing discourse.

DEATH DISARMED OF ITS STING.

IV.

OF THE RESURRECTION.

And, after eight days, again his disciples were within, and Thomas with them. Then came Jesus, the doors being shut, and stood in the midst, and said, Peace be unto you. Then saith he to Thomas, Reach hither thy finger, and behold my hands; and reach hither thy hand, and thrust it into my side: and be not faithless, but believing.—JOHN xx. 26, 27.

AMONG all the articles of our Christian faith, there is none, that hath suffered more persecutions from corrupt reason and seeming impossibilities, than that of the resurrection of Jesus Christ, his triumph over death, and the rescue of his body from the affronts and dishonors of the grave. For, because the improbability of the thing is so great; and the arguments, drawn from nature and reason against it, are so strong to a man, who looks no higher, and believes not that miracles interpose in the series of human affairs: therefore, a doctrine, which is so strange a paradox, as that of the resurrection, had need have very forcible arguments to prove it, that it may be able to overbear the dissent of the world, which else will, doubtless, cry it down, as absurd and impossible.

What great prejudices and importunate objections, infidelity brings against this doctrine, I have shown more at large elsewhere;* and that the utmost they amount to, is only to prove the supernatural, almighty power of the efficient cause, and not the impossibility of the effect.

But against these strong prejudices and plausible arguments, the Christian religion opposeth that, which neither prejudice can overbear nor yet arguments confute, the plain and evident testimony of sense.

This chapter, of which the text is part, gives us abundant attestation to the resurrection of Christ; relating his many appearances to his disciples, who, after his death, conversed corporally with him, and who saw him perform all the functions of life, as

* Discourse upon Acts ii. 24.

eating, drinking, &c., which St. Augustine well saith he did, *non egestate, sed potestate*: not that he needed such weak supports; for his body was then spiritual, incorruptible, and impassible: but to show that he was really a man, and might do it.

On the very day of his resurrection, he appeared to Mary Magdalen, in the morning: v. 14: and, as the circumstance of the history gives us good grounds to conjecture, presently after to Peter: that these, who had been the greatest sinners and were the most passionate mourners, might first of all receive the strongest consolations, by declaring to them his absolute conquest over death and the devil, who had long possessed the one as his own, and almost dispossessed the other of Christ.

On the same day, about noon, he joins himself in company with two of his disciples, who were traveling to Emmaus, about seven miles distant from Jerusalem; and "expounded unto them, in all the Scriptures, the things concerning himself:" Luke xxiv. 27. Upon their discovering him, and his disappearing from them, they speed back the same evening to Jerusalem, eager to declare to the other disciples what had happened unto them. They find them, and divers other believers, late and secretly assembled, for fear of the Jews: and, as they are declaring the events related in the former passages, Jesus himself came "and stood in the midst" of them; and "showed unto them his hands and his side;" and they were "glad, when they saw the Lord:" vv. 19, 20. One would think, that such a sudden surprise as this; appearing to them unexpectedly, when they were, in all likelihood, sadly discoursing of him, and wavering between hope and doubt; might rather have affrighted and terrified, than rejoiced them. They had shut the doors, for fear of the Jews: but, whom the strong bands of death and the bars of the grave could not detain, neither could the bolts and locks of a door exclude: yet we need not here fancy any penetration of dimensions, or that Christ's body passed through the very body of the door, as some affirm, who would rather vouch impossibilities and contradictions, than be barren in inventing miracles: it was wonderful enough, to make his passage by his word and will; and an astonishing sight to see him in the midst of them, whose entrance thither, and sudden opening and shutting of the door, they could not perceive. Whom would it not appall, to have a person, who they knew had been dead and buried, start in upon them from the confines of the grave and the regions of darkness: especially too, at such a time, when night and the fear of their own lives, both which circumstances here concurred, might

make them more apt to receive terrifying impressions? But a revived Saviour is a reviving sight; and the confirmation, which now their faith and hope received, sweetly vanquished all the troublesome suggestions of their fear, converted their doubting into assurance, and their trembling into joy.

This is now the fourth time, that our Saviour showed himself alive to his disciples, on the very day of his resurrection: two of which appearances are recorded in this chapter; and the other two in Luke xxiv.

From this night assembly Thomas is absent: the wisdom of Divine providence so ordering it, that the occasion of his diffidence should produce a stronger argument for the establishing of our faith. He hears their story, condemns their credulity; imputes all, either to some airy ghost or specter, or else to the melancholy illusions of their own fancies: and resolves not to be imposed upon, either by their reports, or any flitting shows and unsubstantial apparitions: "Except," saith he, "I shall see in his hands the print of the nails, and put my finger into the print of the nails, and thrust my hand into his side, I will not believe:" verse 25. A most obstinate and unreasonable resolution! as if nothing were fit to be credited by us, but that of which we ourselves are witnesses; and truth must make no more converts, than it hath testifiers. Well! this passeth with him a whole week; and, because, in the interim, our Saviour had not appeared either to him or them, no doubt but his incredulity was mightily strengthened, and he pleased himself with the conceit of being the only wise and rational man of the whole company. But, "after eight days," saith the text, that is, on the next Lord's day (for, "after eight days," must not be here taken for eight days fully completed, but current: as it is said, Mark viii. 13, that, "after three days," Christ should rise again; that is, on the third day: and, so, Luke ii. 21. When "eight days" were fulfilled, that the child should be circumcised; that is, he was to be circumcised on the eighth day: so, here, on the eighth day, after his first appearances) when they were again met in the like assembly, "and Thomas now with them" Jesus came, "and stood in the midst, and said, Peace be unto you;" and, then applying himself particularly to Thomas, offers to give him all the satisfaction that himself had required, to confirm the truth of his resurrection: "Reach hither thy finger, and behold my hands; and reach hither thy hand, and thrust it into my side."

Whence we may derive several observations.

First. That though our bodies shall be raised entire and perfect, yet Christ's body, after his resurrection, retained those wounds and that solution of parts, which were caused by the nails and spear, and shall retain them forever in heaven. Now no longer painful, but in a body incapable of suffering, Jesus displays them as the monuments and trophies of his victory over sin and death. For the body of Christ was, immediately after his resurrection, endowed with the same qualities that it shall forever enjoy in heaven; except it be that radiant luster and glory, in which it there shines, and which for a time he laid aside that he might the more familiarly converse with his disciples. Think, then, what an inestimable privilege it will be, when we shall hereafter approach in our glorified bodies unto the glorious body of our blessed Saviour; and, as Thomas was invited to do, shall put our fingers into the print of the nails, and thrust our hand into his side, and sound the depth of those fountains, whence flowed forth his precious blood and our salvation with it.

Second. The infinite kindness and condescension of our Saviour, in offering a conviction to his unbelieving disciple upon his own terms, though very bold and unreasonable ones they were. Whether he did actually touch and search those sacred wounds, or satisfied his curiosity with the sight of his Redeemer, is not expressly recorded. Perhaps, shame and modesty checked any farther trial: which, where the object was so plain and evident, would have tended rather to his reproach than conviction; and would have as much argued his unbelief, as confirmed his faith. And this seems intimated in that mild reproof, which our Saviour gives him, verse 29: "Because thou hast seen me, thou hast believed: blessed are they, who have not seen, and yet have believed."

Third. How wisely and graciously our Saviour accommodates his condescensions to the infirmities of his servants. In the morning of the resurrection, when he first appeared to Mary Magdalen, he commands her, who, in all probability, was prostrating herself to embrace his feet, not to touch him, v. 17: "Touch me not; for I am not yet ascended to my Father." Her faith was sufficiently assured; and therefore a touch had been but a needless officiousness: not to be allowed by a person, who was shortly to ascend into heaven; and, whilst now on earth, yet no longer in the state of mortals, nor to be conversed with according to the laws and usages of human respects. Yet, the very same evening, when he appeared to those, who were less assured, yea affrighted, supposing "they had seen a spirit," he bids them handle

him, and see; "for a spirit hath not flesh and bones, as ye see me have:" Luke xxiv. 37-39. And, here, having to deal with one more curious and sceptical than the rest, he bids him make a critical scrutiny; and, to give him full satisfaction, submits, for the cure of his infidelity, to offer those wounds to be pierced again, which the infidelity of the Jews had made.

Fourth. A most irrefragable proof, both of the humanity and divinity of our blessed Saviour. The former, in that he yields himself to the trial and judgment of the most infallible of all our senses: the latter, in that, though he were bodily absent; yet, by his omnipresent Spirit, he heard the discourses and understood the scruples of his dissatisfied disciple; and offers him the very same conditions, verbatim, that he himself had propounded.

Fifth. Though the matter of Christian religion be sublime and mysterious above the comprehension of reason; yet its evidence is so plain, and the motives of credibility so convincing, as to be resolved into the very testimony of sense.

It is this, upon which I intend principally to insist: "Reach hither thy finger, and behold my hands; and reach hither thy hand, and thrust it into my side: and be not faithless, but believing."

The resurrection of Christ from the dead, is the fundamental of all fundamentals in Christianity. Upon the truth and evidence of this depend the truth and evidence of all our religion: for, "if Christ be not raised, your faith is in vain," saith the Apostle, and "ye are yet in your sins:" 1 Cor. xv. 17.

First. Our faith would be vain, because terminated on a deceiver, who promised this; both as the complement of all his other miracles, and the seal of the truth and divinity of his doctrine; wherein, if he had failed, the one would have been justly accounted impostures, and the other lies and falsehoods.

Secondly. We should yet be in our sins, because the propitiatory sacrifice, which he offered upon the cross, would have been of no avail to acquit us of our guilt, had not Christ risen again from the dead, to apply unto us, by his Spirit, the virtue of that oblation, for our righteousness and justification.

So that the whole weight and moment of Christian religion depends upon the resurrection of Christ from the dead, as its only basis and support. All those mysterious truths, which either he himself taught his Church, in his own person, or inspired his Apostles to deliver to the Church in his name, are therefore to be received, therefore to be believed, because they are clearly attested to us by innumerable miracles wrought by him, and by virtue of

his name and faith in it. For God, who is truth itself, will never set the seal of his omnipotence to a lie. And the most miraculous of all those miracles, that, which gives them the firmest attestation that they were wrought by God, is his raising himself from the dead. So that, how abstruse soever the doctrines themselves seem to be, how unaccountable soever to the disquisition, how incomprehensible soever to the sphere and extent of our reason; yet we have still the same certain grounds to believe the most mysterious articles of our faith, as we have to believe, that he, who taught them, rose again from the dead.

I. Whence it appears, that **THE ULTIMATE RESOLUTION OF ALL OUR RELIGION IS MADE INTO THIS OF THE RESURRECTION OF CHRIST.** And, for the truth of this, our Saviour is content to leave himself to the unerring, yea infallible, judgment of human senses.

Lo here the infinite wisdom of the economy and dispensation of the Gospel! that those sublime truths, which far transcend the highest pitch of our reason, should yet be founded upon the certainty of our very senses; so that we have as much reason to believe them, as we have to believe the reality and existence of what we see, and hear, and feel. They hear his salutation: they see his person: he shows to them his hands and his side: he bids them handle and feel him; and speaks to Thomas to search his wounds; he eats, and drinks, and converses with them: and these evidences he gives, not only to single persons, but sometimes to whole multitudes of them; not in one single instance, but several times, and in several places, for forty days' continuance.

This, therefore, is the first and great thing, which Thomas was to believe, even the resurrection of his Saviour, confirmed to him by the infallible evidence of his sense; and, upon the belief of which, depends the belief of all the mysteries of our religion.

i. Against this report, which the Gospel gives us, of the resurrection of our Saviour, there can lie but **TWO DOUBTS.**

The one is, whether the relaters of it might have had no design to delude us:

The other, whether they were not deluded themselves.

For, if it can be evinced, that they were neither deceivers nor deceived, it is clear, in spite of all seeming impossibilities, that our Lord really and corporally rose again from the dead.

Both, these, therefore, I shall endeavor to make good.

1. *As to those atheists, who do not so much question the infallibility of sense, as the credit of the relaters:* nor whether what they saw or felt were truly such as their sense dictated it to be; but whether they did, indeed, see and feel, and had the sensible trial of those things, which they give out to the world, and did not rather conspire together to revive their lost credit and their sinking religion, by reviving him, whose doctrine they embraced and whose person they admired: to persons, who may be assaulted with such doubts as these, I shall, to remove such vain surmises, offer these following considerations.

(1) Let them consider, that it is not the custom or interest of liars, to appeal unto the testimony of many witnesses, for the truth of what they assert: since it is most likely, that, among a great company and number of them, some one may be found, who, either out of honesty, interest, or weakness, may afterwards detect the fraud and all the mystery of the combination.

Had there been but one or two, to have avouched the resurrection of Christ and asserted his appearance to them, there might have been some more colorable pretense for the atheist to be suspicious, that they had combined together to delude the world with fables, and reported what they never saw. But, the appearance of our Lord Jesus Christ was not like those apparitions of saints and angels, with which the Popish legends are so nauseously stuffed; vouchsafed to a solitary, melancholy monk, or two: but at several times, to several persons; and, oftentimes, to very many of them together. St. Paul speaks of a whole cloud of witnesses; so many, as cannot leave the least surmise in the most scrupulous mind, that they should all attest his resurrection by confederacy: 1 Cor. xv. 6: "He was seen by above five hundred brethren at once; of whom," he tells us, "the greater part" were then alive, when he wrote this Epistle: and this famous appearance to so numerous a company may either be that mentioned Matt. xxviii. 7, where he promiseth, to meet them in Galilee; or, else, that at the Mount of Olives, when he ascended gloriously into heaven. Now, had there been any forgery or falsehood in the joint testimony of so many hundred witnesses, doubtless, the unbelieving Jews and heathen, who neglect no occasions to discover the defects of a hated doctrine, would have had advantage enough to detect it among some of them: for it is not reasonably to be imagined, that so many should combine together, in an unprofitable design to delude the world; or, if they should, yet that they should all

persist in it to their death, without ever giving the least sign of the uncertainty and vacillation of their testimony.

(2) Suppose there had been no other witnesses of the resurrection of Christ, but only the eleven Apostles: yet, who is it, that would be so wicked, as to abuse mankind by forged stories, in a matter of such vast moment and consequence; especially, when they could expect no reward nor advantage by it? For, though human nature be most miserably depraved; yet we shall find few or none, that will be wicked gratis. And, what could they propound to themselves, that might rationally be thought sufficient to induce them to such a grand cheat? Either it must be supposed to be riches; or fame; or, lastly, a barren and unprofitable design of keeping up the credit of their religion.

[1] But the first is altogether incongruous, both to their profession and practice.

For the preaching of the Gospel and a raised Saviour, instead of enriching them, only exposed them to hunger, and thirst, and nakedness; or, to the shame of having these necessities relieved by the charity of others. Nor could they say, with that profane Pope, "*Quantas divitias peperit nobis hæc fabula Christi!*" "How much wealth this fable of Christ has procured for us!"

[2] As for fame, their simple and homely education, free from the pride and ostentation of the world, could never have permitted them to undergo so many sharp miseries, only to be talked of.

Besides, what Grotius very well observes, (*De Ver. Christ. Rel.*) they could not be moved to what they did, out of a desire of fame and propagating their name and renown to after-posterities; for they did not then believe their names or memory should be long lasting: for it appears, that God, for wise ends, kept his purpose secret from them, concerning the consummation of the world; and, that they verily thought, the dissolution of all things would immediately follow upon their preaching the Gospel. It is, therefore, altogether incredible, that they should contrive to delude the world out of hope of being famous: since they thought their names should certainly die with them; or, at farthest, soon after them, in the death and last funeral of the world itself.

(3) The only supposition, therefore, that remains, is, that they feigned this story of the resurrection of Jesus Christ, only to keep up their religion, and to add a greater confirmation and authority to their doctrine.

But this, likewise, is utterly absurd to imagine. For, either

they did believe the doctrine and religion, which they taught, to be true; or, they did not.

[1] If they did not believe it true, yea if they did not believe it the best and the only divine and heavenly religion in the whole world, what should move them to embrace it, to the hazard of their lives; and to reject other religions, which they thought to be better, and which they knew to be safer and attended with greater worldly advantages? Can it be conceived, that men should be so far lost to reason and that inbred principle of self-preservation, as to thrust themselves upon all the injuries of an enraged world, yea upon most certain and cruel deaths, for the maintenance of a doctrine, which they themselves knew to be false, and from which they could expect no future benefit to compensate their sufferings? Either the atheist must suppose them to be atheists, or not: but, if they were atheists, it is mere madness for an atheist, who believes no religion, to die for any doctrine or opinion; and I remember, I have somewhere read a story of one condemned for atheism, that recanted upon that very reason: and, if they were not atheists, but did believe a God and future rewards and punishments, as it is most evident they did, then it were worse than madness, to die for a religion, which they knew to be false; since they could expect nothing else, but that their dying for a lie should be punished with an eternal death. It is therefore, most clear and certain, that they did believe their religion and doctrine to be true; yea, to be infinitely the best in the world.

[2] Wherefore, if they did believe their religion to be true, then it follows:

1st. That they did not join together in a design to delude and cheat the world with tales, which they knew to be false and forged. And,

2dly. If they did believe their religion to be true, they must needs also believe the Master, Teacher and Author of it, not to have been himself a deceiver. But, unless they had been verily persuaded, that Christ did rise again from the dead, how could they account of him otherwise than as a deceiver? For he had promised them, that, after three days, he would rise again. And, of this promise they anxiously and solicitously expected the performance, after his death: for we find, that, when the third day was come, they began to entertain sad and misgiving thoughts concerning their hopes of his being the Messiah; as we may see, Luke xxiv. 21, where the two disciples, who were going to Emmaus, tell Christ a very sad story of one Jesus of Nazareth

who had been lately crucified at Jerusalem; and declare, with a seeming mixture of shame and diffidence, that they "trusted, that it had been he, which should have redeemed Israel: and beside all this," say they, "to-day is the third day, since these things were done." Luke xxiv. 21. Certainly, if their faith began to stagger, before the time for the accomplishment of Christ's promise was fully expired, only because he had not publicly and openly appeared to them, although they had heard, as they confess, rumors from others concerning his resurrection; had he not risen at all, they would quickly have renounced their ill-grounded faith, and fallen from the profession of that new religion, as soon as they had discovered the author of it to be no better than a foul deceiver and impostor. So that, I think, I have now made it demonstratively clear, that the Apostles, in reporting the resurrection of Christ, were not combined together, in a design to delude the easy world.

2. *That they were not deluded themselves, nor imposed upon by false appearances*, imagining, that they saw Christ raised, who, indeed, lay still under the arrest of death, and the power of the grave; is that, which I am next to demonstrate to you.

And, as to this, the text, which I have read, furnisheth me with arguments enough, to convince all those, who will not on purpose turn sceptics and reject the verdict of their very senses: "He showed unto them his hands and his side. Then were the disciples glad, when they saw the Lord." What greater confirmation can be expected? I have already shown you, that they could not conspire together to deceive the world, with reports which they themselves knew to be false; and that they were not themselves deceived, we have here the testimony of their senses: they heard his salutation, and saw his person. Most unreasonable are those men, who will disbelieve the reality and existence of those things, which they see and touch. And, although reason may possibly dispute many plausible things against the resurrection: yet we ought to resign our reason to our faith: especially when God hath been graciously pleased to give us so great a reason for our faith, as our very sense. It is foolish and in vain, for sophistry to urge impossibilities against the joint testimony of the hand, the eye, and the ear. They heard him discourse in the same tenor, both of voice and heavenly matter, as before: they saw the same figure, lineaments, and proportion of body in him, as formerly: they observed the orifices of those wounds, which the nails and spear had made in his hands and side: they felt him breathing upon

them; which, certainly, if any thing, is the most infallible evidence of life: they touched his flesh, firm and substantial as before it was: nay, one of them, too curious and scrupulous to be imposed upon by false shows or airy fantastic shapes, would not believe, unless he plunged his hand into his sacred side. Now what greater confirmation could diffidence itself have desired, to assure them, that he was really a living man? If, after all these evidences, there might yet remain any place for delusion or ground for distrust; for my part, I see not how they could be well assured, that ever there was such a man as Jesus in the world. The very same reasons, which might make them doubt whether he were the true Jesus after his resurrection, might as well make them doubt whether he were the true Jesus before his crucifixion; yea, and to doubt, whether they were truly one another. And, why might not we as well doubt, whether or no we are men, and not rather specters, and phantoms, and mere empty shapes and shades of men? For we have no more reason to believe that those whom we see before us are men, than the disciples had to believe, that Christ appeared to them after his death, a true, real, and substantial man. They had the testimony of their senses for it; and we have no more for any thing that we see or touch, here in the world. "He showed unto them his hands and his side:" and they were "glad, when they saw the Lord."

So that, put all this together, and it amounts to a most certain and undoubted proof, that Christ is indeed risen from the dead. For,

(1) It is certain, that his disciples saw him and conversed with him, after his resurrection.

For they could not feign such a story, either for riches, or fame, or the maintenance of a religion which they thought to be false; and false it must be, if the Author of it had not risen again, as he promised.

(2) It is again most certain, that, if they heard, and saw, and touched him, and conversed long with him, and had all the testimonies of their senses to confirm it, then it was that very Jesus, who was crucified and buried, who also was raised from the dead.

For those men, who can doubt this, may as well and with as good reason doubt, whether they are men or no.

So that they were neither deceivers nor deceived: and, therefore, what they affirm in this matter, is of infallible truth and certainty.

ii. From the Scripture's appealing thus to the evidence of sense, for the truth of a fact, on which that of the whole Christian religion depends, it is easy and natural to infer, that **WHATEVER DOCTRINES ARE CONTRARY TO THE PLAIN TESTIMONY OF OUR SENSES, ARE NOT ONLY FALSE IN THEMSELVES, BUT TEND TO OVERTHROW THE VERY FOUNDATION OF OUR RELIGION.**

For, if Christian religion be established upon the resurrection of Christ, and this resurrection of Christ can no otherwise be proved but by the evidence of sense: they, who impose such doctrines as destroy the credit of our senses, do, by very fair and necessary consequence, destroy likewise the credibility of Christian religion.

And such is that monstrous doctrine of transubstantiation, held by the Church of Rome: viz.: that, in the consecration of the Holy Sacrament, the bread is really changed into the true and proper body of Jesus Christ, and the wine into his true and proper blood: a doctrine, which puts a gross affront, not only on our reason, because of the innumerable contradictions involved in it; but a most intolerable affront upon our very senses, giving the lie to all the reports which they make, and flatly telling them that they are not to be believed in what they relate concerning their proper objects.

And what is the fatal yet necessary issue of this, but that we are left under an utter uncertainty, as to all the mysteries of our faith? For, if the sense of all mankind may deceive them, we have no assurance, that either Christ lived, or taught, or wrought miracles, or died, or rose again, or ascended into heaven: for I have no more reason to believe, that the same person, who was crucified and dead, did rise again from the dead, because the disciples saw, and heard, and touched him; than I have to believe, that what he gave them at his last supper was truly bread and wine, since they saw, and touched, and tasted it as such. Their senses equally voted for both: and, if there might be a deception in the one, why not in the other?

And, so, for the sake of a rotten superstructure, we must overturn the very ground-work of faith, yea and of all certainty, unless we will very meekly suppose, that the Apostles were blessed with that wonderful privilege of discerning a human body in the shape of a loaf; or of feeling that to be flesh and blood, which yet they handled and tasted as bread and wine: a privilege, I dare say, never granted to any Christians since their days!

And, if we cannot make any such strange discoveries, they

ought not to be offended at us, though we still call that bread and wine, which approves itself so to all our senses; since our blessed Saviour himself could give no stronger proof that he was himself, than by appealing to the senses of those who saw and touched him: "Handle me, and see; for a spirit hath not flesh and bones, as you see me have:" Luke xxiv. 39. This he thought a sufficient proof to convince them, that he had a human body: and shall not we think it a sufficient proof, that their wheaten god hath not a human body, when our sight, our touch, our smell, our taste, all give in their concurrent verdict, that it hath neither flesh nor bones. We do *see*, we do *handle*, that it hath neither flesh nor bones; and, therefore, cannot be the proper body of Christ, which was crucified and raised again.

Certainly, since this doctrine of transubstantiation baffles all those arguments, by which our Saviour himself was content that his resurrection should be tried, and the truth of all his gospel verified, we may well explode it: not only as infinitely absurd, but most blasphemous and atheistical; and such, as enervates the strongest proofs and the clearest evidences, which Christ himself could produce, that he was no deceiver.

I know, they will betake themselves to their fortress of *hoc est corpus meum: this is my body*. "There," say they, "we have express and literal Scripture for it." But how do they, or how can we know, that there are any such words as these? Is it by our senses? Either our seeing them written, or hearing them read? Yea, how could the Apostles, from whose relation these words were written, know that our Saviour ever spake them? Was it not because they believed their senses? And, what! shall we make them so fond, as to believe their single sense of hearing; when yet they must not, under pain of heresy, believe their several senses, of touching, tasting, and seeing? I pray, what prerogative of infallibility hath the ear above the hand, the eye, or the palate? Sure I am, that the Apostle joins them equally in commission: "that which we have heard, which we have seen with our eyes, which we have looked upon, and our hands have handled, of the word of life, that declare we unto you:" 1 John i. 1-3: and yet we must, contrary to the judgment of three or four of our senses concerning their proper objects, believe a doctrine, for which the only proof they have, refers us to the testimony of one of our senses; for they tell us, the words are written, and we may see them, "This is my body." It is true, we do see them; and, therefore, believe that they are written; but, what! do we likewise see

with our eyes, that the sense of them is proper and literal? We see it written that Christ is a rock, a vine, a door; and, therefore, we believe it: but is it therefore true, that he is properly all these?

Certainly, if there be any miracles wrought in the Church of Rome, the greatest of them is, that they should be able to prevail with men in their wits to believe such gross absurdities. But the subject is too grave for satire; else, the provocations to it were very sufficient, to expose such a stupid piece of nonsense to the utmost scorn and derision.

Yet this, I think, we may very seriously assert.

1. That those, who would prove transubstantiation by the written word, "*This is my body,*" *do miserably invalidate the force of their own argument:* since my sight can no more assure me, that any such words are written, than it assures me, that that is bread and wine which I receive.

2. That *we have as clear evidence of the falsehood of transubstantiation, as any we have, or can possibly have, concerning the truth, either of the resurrection of Christ from the dead, or of any other great and important article of the Christian faith.* Neither have I, nor can any other man have, stronger grounds to believe, that Christ's natural body was raised from the grave, than we have to believe, that that is not his natural body, which we receive in the eucharist.

3. *It is utterly impossible, that there can be clearer evidence for the one, than for the other.* For, suppose a man should hear a voice from heaven, which should tell him, that the elements were substantially changed into the true and proper body and blood of Christ; and yet, afterwards, to his touch, his taste, his sight, his smell, they shall still appear to be truly bread and wine; I would ask, whether he might not as rationally suspect his hearing concerning that voice, as three other of his chief senses, when they give in their reports concerning their proper objects, and that likewise consonant to the sense of all the rest of mankind: so that, in short, the issue is this, he, who believes transubstantiation, hath no reason to believe any thing; for he destroys all motives and grounds of credibility.

But, it may be, the more absurd their faith is, the more merit is in it; in that they will believe things contrary to all reason, and all their senses. But let them beware also, that, by such a brutish and stubborn faith as this is, they do not destroy all possibility of the certainty of divine revelations (which, sure, must be made to some of our senses) and all the doctrines of the Christian religion, whilst they obtrude upon the faith of their credulous disciples such

a monstrous figment, as utterly overthrows the credibility of all other things.

II. But when it is said to Thomas, "Be not faithless, but believing:" not only the resurrection of Christ, but **OTHER POINTS OF FAITH, WHICH ARE IMMEDIATELY BUILT UPON IT, AND BY CLEAR CONSEQUENCE DEDUCIBLE FROM IT, ARE INCLUDED.**

i. As, from the testimony of sense, they had all the reason in the world to believe the resurrection of Christ; so, believing this, there is **A LIKE REASON TO BELIEVE, THAT HE INDEED IS THE TRUE MESSIAH.**

For, had he been a false prophet and an impostor, neither could he have raised up himself, being but a mere man; neither would God have raised him up, being but a mere deceiver. Hence, when the Jews called for a sign from Christ, to prove him to be the true Messiah, he still gives them the sign of his resurrection: as if a greater and more evident proof than that could neither be given nor demanded. "There shall no sign be given them, but the sign of the prophet Jonas: for, as Jonas was three days and three nights in the whale's belly, so shall the Son of Man be three days and three nights in the heart of the earth:" Matt. xii. 38-40. And so, again, when they tempted him for another sign, to prove himself the true Messiah, he instances his resurrection: John ii. 18-21; "What signs shonest thou unto us?.....Jesus answered.....Destroy this temple, and in three days I will raise it up;....he spake of the temple of his body." So that, still, the resurrection of Christ is a most infallible sign and proof, that he is the true Messiah and Saviour of the world.

Now think, oh Christian! what joy it must needs be, to have such an irrefragible testimony, that thou hast not misplaced thy faith, thy hope, and thy worship: but that that Jesus, whom thou servest, was not only shamefully lifted up upon the cross, but gloriously raised up from the grave. How would the malicious Jews have insulted over the poor disciples' credulity, if Christ had not vindicated himself from the hand of the grave; and, by the power of his Almighty Godhead, overcome death within its own territories; and, in triumph, brought back his own body, as a spoil rescued from that mighty destroyer! and, therefore, the Apostle saith, Rom. i. 4, that Christ was "declared to be the Son of God with power....by the resurrection from the dead."

ii. Be not faithless, but believe, that by this resurrection of thy Saviour, of which we have such undoubted testimony, **THE WHOLE WORK OF THY REDEMPTION IS COMPLETED.**

This glorious action gives the last complement and perfection unto it. The full work of our redemption consists, not only in the purchase of mercy for us, but also in the application of that purchase to us. The purchase was, indeed, made by the death of Christ; in which a full price was paid down to the justice of God: but the application of this purchase to us, is made by the resurrection and life of Christ. For he applies to us the benefits of his passion, both by the prevalence of his intercession, and by the mission of the Holy Ghost: by the former he powerfully mediates with God to bestow them: by the latter, he effectually fits and prepares us to receive them. And both these are the blessed fruits of his resurrection and eternal life: for "he ever liveth to make intercession for us:" Heb. vii. 25: and, "being at the right hand of God.....and having received of the Father the promise of the Holy Ghost, he hath shed forth this, which ye now see and hear:" Acts ii. 33, which, though occasionally spoken concerning his miraculous gifts, is yet equally true of his sanctifying graces: so, John xvi. 7, "If I depart, I will send him (the Comforter) unto you. And I will pray the Father, and he shall give you another Comforter.....even the Spirit of Truth:" John xiv. 16, 17. There was no one prejudice, that so much hindered the Gospel from taking place upon the hearts of Jews and heathens in the primitive times, as this of the death and cross of Christ: for believing, that he was lifted up upon the cross, but not believing that he was raised up out of the grave; their natural reason judged it folly, to expect life from him, who was not able to preserve or restore his own. Indeed, it were folly thus to hope, did not his life apply what his death merited; our salvation being begun upon the cross, but perfected upon the throne. The loss of his life would never have procured life for us, but that, as he laid it down with freedom, so he resumed it again with power: "I have power to lay" down my life, "and I have power to take it again:" John x. 18. Indeed, it was his life and resurrection, that put virtue and efficacy into his death and passion: and, hence it is, that the Apostle seems to speak of the resurrection and intercession of Christ as having a greater influence into our justification, than his death and sufferings: Rom. viii. 34: "Who is he, that condemneth? It is Christ that died, *μαλλον δε*, yea rather, that is risen again.....who also maketh intercession for us:" as if this were a surer foundation for our faith and

comfort, than his death and passion. And, Rom. v. 10: "We were reconciled to God by the death of his Son, *πολλῷ μᾶλλον*, much more.....we shall be saved by his life:" reconciliation is made by the death of Christ, but the actual application of this is by his life. In respect of merit, it is wrought out for us by his death: in respect of efficacy, it is only applied to us by his life.

And, therefore, we find, that all the great benefits which Christ hath purchased for us by his death, are, by the Scripture, ascribed likewise to his life and resurrection. As,

1. *Pardon of sin.*

1 Cor. xv. 17: "If Christ be not raised.....ye are yet in your sins;" i. e. under the condemning guilt of them.

2. *Justification of our persons.*

Rom. iv. 25: He "was delivered for our offenses, and was raised again for our justification." If he had not risen from the dead, he could not have justified us, because he himself had not been justified. He was, saith the Apostle, "justified in the Spirit:" 1 Tim. iii. 16, that is, by the almighty power of the Spirit that quickened him; or, else, by retaking his soul and spirit again unto him. If our surety had still lain under arrest, the debt had not been satisfied; and, therefore, neither could we have been acquitted. But, being declared just by his resurrection, and discharged out of the prison of the grave, he now justifies us by the merit of his obedience and suffering.

3. *Our future inheritance of life and glory* is, likewise, ascribed to the life and resurrection of Christ.

John xiv. 3: "If I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again and receive you unto myself: that, where I am, there ye may be also:" and, v. 19, "Because I live, ye shall live also;" i. e. because I shall forever live interceding for you, therefore shall ye forever live with me in glory.

Thus, you see, that all the great and spiritual benefits, which redound to believers by the death of Christ, do equally redound to them by his resurrection and life; and, that there is no part of our redemption, but it receives its confirmation and validity, as well from the glories and triumphs of his life, as from the shame and ignominy of his death. So that what the Apostle saith, Rom. xiv. 8: "Whether we live, we live unto the Lord; or whether we die, we die unto the Lord: whether we live therefore, or die, we are the Lord's;" we may happily invert, and say, whether the Lord liveth, he liveth for us; or, whether he dieth, he dieth for us:

whether, therefore, he live or die, he is ours: for him either to live or die, is our gain and advantage.

Since, then, we have such undoubted assurance, that our Lord Jesus Christ is risen again from the dead, we may be as firmly assured, that the great end, both of his death and of his resurrection, is fully accomplished; which is the redemption of fallen and lost mankind, and the justification of all that believe in his name.

iii. Be not faithless, but believe, that the resurrection of Christ is A MOST CERTAIN PLEDGE OF OUR FUTURE RESURRECTION AND ETERNAL GLORY.

Certainly, since the head is raised, the members shall not always sleep in the dust. But, as Christ's natural body was raised, so shall also his mystical; and every member of it shall be made forever glorious, with a glorious and triumphant head. He is risen before, to pluck us out of our graves: and then shall our vile bodies be made like unto his glorious body; bright as the sun, impassible as angels, and quick as the motions of light. And, shall this corruptible put on incorruption, and this mortal put on immortality? Shall the womb of the grave bring forth, and death itself give up the ghost? Shall the soul be immediately heightened into its happiness, and the body only lie down in its bed of earth, and there sleep away a short night of oblivion? Shall both soul and body enjoy a posthumous union, and all mankind everlastingly survive their own funerals? "Where," then, "is thy sting? Oh death! oh grave! where is thy victory?" What is there so terrible in this king of terrors? We may justly use the speech, without the presumption of Agag, "Surely, the bitterness of death is past." Our souls shall as certainly meet our bodies with vital embraces, as the soul of Christ did his; and these eyes of ours shall behold our blessed Redeemer, whose resurrection is both the cause and the pattern of ours. Oh think, what a ravishing sight it will be, to see the Lord in his body: that body, which was buffeted, which was crucified, which was raised for thee; and, through whose resurrection and glory, thou also art raised and glorified. Think, what unspeakable joy it will be, when thy body and thy Saviour's shall be alike. Think, what an infinite advancement, when thy soul shall not only be like the angels, but thy very body shall be like thy God's. And, though it must first be crumbled into dust, and undergo many dishonorable changes; yet know, that the grave is a safe repository, and death a responsible debtor. They shall give account for every atom of dust entrusted to

them : and, then, that, which fell a clod, shall rise a star : our cottage shall be turned into a palace, our ruins rebuilt into a glorious temple. And, if the hand of death take us asunder, it is but as we use to do with our watches, to make them clean, and then put them together again ; that our body may be a glorious instrument, and a glorious habitation, for a glorified soul.

But, before we take possession of this glorious inheritance, we have yet another stage to pass through, after those of our death and resurrection : and that is, the last judgment ; the subject of my next discourse.

DEATH DISARMED OF ITS STING.

V.

OF THE LAST JUDGMENT.

For we must all appear before the judgment-seat of Christ; that every one may receive the things done in his body, according to that he hath done, whether it be good or bad. 2 COR. v. 10.

I DOUBT not, but, at the reading of these words, some may be struck with terror, and some affected with prejudice; some, to think how dreadful, others, how common that truth is, of which I am now about to treat.

Common doctrines are like common mercies; the most useful, and yet the most slighted. What more necessary, than the common air and light? and, yet, because God hath made no distinction in his distribution of these, but a beggar may breathe as pure air and see as clear light as a prince; therefore are they despised, and accounted rather a debt of nature than an effect of mercy: that alone is esteemed great, and bears a value, which but few enjoy.

Now, though this be a most absurd judgment, which we pass upon God's mercies; yet are we altogether as absurd and irrational in judging of his truths. Singular notions, which but a few understand, and have not overmuch of sense and perhaps but too much of error in them, are cried up by men of itching ears and unstable minds, as the admired truths of the age. That is grown despicable, which every body knows.

And, as for those stale and old-fashioned truths, of death and judgment, heaven and hell, professors, now-a-days, learnt them once in their catechisms, and perhaps never thought of them since. These are such things, which, while we reason with them, they already know; yea and, I believe, some, with Felix, may tremble at them too.

And, so, between those, who despise them, because common; and those, who hate them, because dreadful; it is the hardest matter in the world, for such doctrines as these, to sink either into men's affections or to engage their attention.

But, whoever you are that read this, I beseech you, think with yourselves, what affections it would move, should you now hear the sound of the last trump; should you feel the dead, that lie

here buried, begin to stir and heave under you; should you see here a tomb-stone removed and there a grave thrown open, here a head and there an arm, here one limb and there another, thrust out of the earth; the throng and multitude of some already risen, some just rising, and all hastening to judgment: would not such a spectacle as this, fright you into more serious thoughts, than perhaps the most of you have, even when you are in God's presence? "What security have I for my soul? What interest in my Saviour? What account can I give unto my Judge? Oh! what sentence shall I hear, by and by, pronounced upon me?" Thus, would you all, with amazed and trembling hearts, expect the issue of that great and terrible day of the Lord, which now you put far away from you; and, it may be, much farther in your own thoughts, than God hath done in his decrees. Well, stir up the same affections now: you will not be much deceived, if you think you hear and see these things present before you this hour: there are but a few years, that make a difference between what is and what shall be: and, when they are struck off, death, and judgment, and eternity, are really present with you; as really present, as the things you behold with your eyes. Could we but keep that sound always in our ears, which St. Jerome witnesseth, was always loud in his, "Surgite, mortui, &c. Arise, ye dead, and come away to judgment:" the judge is set, the books are opening, doom is passing: how would this nip all our carnal jollity and childish pride; and make us careful to improve that time, to employ those talents, to regulate those thoughts, those discourses, those actions, for which we must, shortly, give so narrow an account to a most strict and impartial judge.

It was this apprehension which made St. Paul both so earnest in pressing the exercise of holiness upon others, and so laborious in the practice of it himself. Touching others, he tells us, v. 11: "Knowing the terrors of the Lord, we persuade men:" touching himself, v. 9, "We labor, that, whether present or absent, we may be accepted of him: so to please him by holiness and obedience, that, whether in our voyage or in our haven, whether in this world or in the next, we may be loved by him, and accepted.

And, why all this care and circumspection? Why should this be the end of all his actions, and the only thing in the world he resolves to mind? There is good reason for it: shortly we must be judged by him: and, therefore, it is but needful to study now to please him: "We must all appear before the judgment seat of

Christ," to receive according to what we have done, "whether it be good or bad."

In handling this most awful and tremendous point of religion, I shall not answer those nice and uncertain questions; where is the place? or, when shall be the time of this great judgment? Neither of these hath God clearly revealed in his word.

As for the *place*, the Jews think, that this great and last assize shall be held in the "valley of Jehosaphat," near Jerusalem; according as they expound Joel iii. 2: others, on the whole surface of the earth: others, "in the air," from 1 Thess. iv. 17, where the Apostle speaks of our being taken up to meet Christ "in the air." And this, indeed, I judge to be the most probable: both because it is most capacious to contain so great a multitude, as all nations, and languages, all families, and persons, that ever lived in the world, amount unto; and, also, because, in the resurrection, men's bodies shall become incorruptible and spiritual: 1 Cor. xv. 42-45. That is, they shall be endowed with refined and spiritual qualities, of impassibility and agility, whereby, possibly, they may move more freely, in the air, than now they do upon the earth. But these are only conjectures.

And, concerning the *uncertainty* of the same, Christ hath told us, "Of that day and hour" (and it as true, of that month and year) "knoweth no man; no, not the angels of heaven, but the Father only:" Matt. xxiv. 36. Nay, our Saviour tells them, Mark, xiii. 32, that he himself knew it not; nor men, nor angels, no, nor the Son: that is, as the Son of Man he knew it not; but, as he is the Son of God, so all things are known unto him; being one in essence, and equal in knowledge, with the Father.

Omitting, therefore, these uncertainties; there is a twofold day of judgment: the one, particular: the other, universal: the one, of the soul only, immediately after death; the other, both of soul and body united together, immediately after the resurrection.

First. There is a *particular day of judgment*, that follows immediately after every man's death.

There is no such thing as a neutral state of the soul: a state, wherein it is neither happy nor miserable; a state of slumber, wherein, as some men dream, it sleeps away the time until the resurrection, without sense either of pain or comfort. "We know," saith the Apostle, "that if our earthly house.....were dissolved," that is, as soon as it is dissolved, "we have.....a house.....eternal in

the heavens:" 2 Cor. v. 1; and, which is a convincing and demonstrative argument, the Apostle, Phil. i. 23, desires "to depart, and to be with Christ" Should his soul have been kept from Christ till the day of judgment, what reason was there for him to desire death; since his very desire of death was only for this end, that his soul might the sooner enjoy Christ? For, if his soul must have slept with his body till the resurrection, whether he had died sooner or later, or not died at all, but lived to the very end of the world, it had been all one, as to his enjoyment of Christ. So the wise man also, Eccles. xii. 7: "The dust," that is, the body, "shall return to the earth.....and the spirit," that is, the soul, "shall return unto God, who gave it:" it shall return to him, that so it may receive its sentence from him; either a sentence of absolution, according to our faith and obedience; or of condemnation, according to our unbelief and impenitence. We are apt to look upon the day of judgment as afar off; some hundreds, or, it may be, thousands of years hence; and think it will never overtake us: be it so: yet, certainly, thy day of judgment is near at hand; and what relief is it, that the last day shall not be till some hundreds of years hence, if yet thy soul must lie in hell all those years under insupportable torments? How know we, but that death may be now striking us, the worms may be now expecting us, our bell may be now tolling, our grave now digging? However, doubtless, these things will shortly be: shortly we shall all breathe our last, and give that gasp that will dismiss our souls from our bodies; and then is *our* judgment day. And, oh! what strange discoveries will that last moment make! We shall there see, what we have heard and believed of eternity here: sentence will be instantly pronounced, while the soul is as yet warm from the body: and, accordingly, either angels will wing it away into Abraham's bosom, to heaven, the seat of eternal joy; or devils, who are present about sick-beds, watching for their prey, will drag it down to eternal torments. And, according to the sentence passed upon every soul in this particular judgment, so shall they have the foretastes and essays, either of happiness or misery; in which the whole man, both soul and body, must abide forever.

Secondly. There is an *universal judgment*. And this is to begin immediately after the resurrection.

The former judgment proceeded according as death, God's grim sergeant, arrested such and such a particular soul, and brought it before him: but, here, all, who ever have been or shall be in the world, shall, together, stand before Christ's tribunal, to receive

their doom; and that not only naked souls, but soul and body united. There is but one time, when heaven and hell shall be quite empty of souls: and that is, at the resurrection: for, before God proceeds to judgment, he will first set the gates of heaven and hell wide open, and send out the whole multitude of souls, each to find its own body: one meets it with joy and embraces; the other, with curses: it curseth itself: it curseth those members, into which it must now again enter; those members, which were once instruments of sin, and must be always partners with it in torments. Both righteous and wicked, all alike, must appear in their bodies: and, though they do, beforehand, know themselves to be either acquitted or condemned; yet this is the time for the solemn and conspicuous pronouncing of the sentence, and distribution of rewards. It is remarkable, that the Scriptures do point out that great day to us, as the time, wherein mercy and forgiveness, rest and refreshing, joy and gladness, redemption and salvation, rewards and crowns, shall be bestowed upon God's children; and, on the contrary, wrath, and destruction, and everlasting vengeance, shall be executed upon the wicked: not to heap up places, see both of these, 2 Thess. i. 6-8: "It is a righteous thing with God, to recompense tribulation to them that trouble you; and, to you, who are troubled, rest with us:" but when must this two-fold recompense be made? "when the Lord Jesus shall be revealed from heaven, with his mighty angels, in flaming fire, taking vengeance on them that know not God, and obey not the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ:" so Luke xiv. 14: "Thou shalt be recompensed at the resurrection of the just:" what! not before? Yes, as soon as the soul parts from the body, it receives its recompense: but, because the great and solemn time of retribution is the day of judgment, when God will *manifest* his justice to all the world, angels and men: therefore, the Scriptures ascribe rewards and punishments to this day.

Now, in further treating on this subject, I shall insist upon these general heads:

The *certainly* of a future judgment.

Who it is, that is appointed then to be the *Judge*.

Who shall be *associates* on the bench, and *assistants* in the judgment.

The *manner and method* of the whole transaction.

Who they are, that shall be judged.

What they shall be judged for; and what *account* they must give.

According to *what law* they shall be judged.

The *witnesses*, that shall appear against them.

The *pleas and excuses*, which the accused will then make for themselves; and the *invalidity* of them.

The *adjustment of the sentence*, according to what hath been here done in the body, whether good or bad.

I. I shall begin with the CERTAINTY OF A FUTURE JUDGMENT.

That there shall be a judgment to come, is both certain and necessary. This great and terrible day of the Lord will come, and will not tarry. God's hand is continually turning over our days and years, like the leaves of a book: there is something written on every one of them: the last is coming; and that, like the index or table, must give account of all the rest. There must be a last day, as there was a first: and this last day will bring to public view and knowledge, whatsoever hath been done all the days which the world hath stood.

This is clear, both from Scripture evidence, and likewise from rational grounds and arguments.

The Scripture is both full and express, that there shall be such a general, such a solemn and dreadful judgment. We have a full description given of it by our Saviour, Matt. xxv. 31 to the end of the chapter: "The Son of man.....shall sit upon the throne of his glory," attended with angels; all nations standing before him, whom he will separate, some on his right hand to everlasting life, and some on his left hand to unquenchable fire. So, Luke viii. 17: There is nothing hid, which shall not be revealed: and when revealed, but "in that day when God shall judge the secrets of men by Jesus Christ?" As it is, Rom. ii. 16, so, in the 14th and 15th verses of Jude, "Enoch, the seventh from Adam, prophesied, saying, Behold the Lord cometh with ten thousand of his saints, to execute judgment upon all:" and many other places too long and numerous to be here related.

And, beside Scripture, reason also itself doth clearly show, that there shall be a future judgment, in which God will render to every man according to his works.

i. This appears from THE ACCUSING OR EXCUSING OFFICE OF CONSCIENCE.

Whence proceeds that regret, those gnawings and stings of conscience, for sin, which sometimes the very worst of men feel?

Because every man doth, as it were, naturally presage, that there shall be a day of judgment, wherein those sinful actions shall be brought to an account, and they punished for them? Even the consciences of the heathen themselves, who never had the light of the Scripture to reveal to them the judgment of the last day, would witness against them, disquiet, and trouble them, when they sinned against their natural light: their conscience would bear witness, and their thoughts accuse, or else excuse them; as the Apostle speaks, Rom. ii. 15. Now what was it that could trouble their consciences, but only some secret hints and obscure notions of a judgment and wrath to come. We find them all strongly possessed with the apprehensions of a future state, in proportion to their present actions; hence, their *barathrum* and *elysium*, their hell and paradise: hence, their three severe and impartial judges: hence, their strange invented punishments, bearing a correspondence to the crimes of those who were said to undergo them; which, though they were but the fictions of their poets, yet the very consent of nature and of nations dictated, that there were torments to be suffered, according to the sins here committed. The very workings of natural conscience, therefore, strongly prove, that there shall be a judgment.

ii. This too may be evidently proved, from THE EQUITY AND JUSTICE OF GOD'S NATURE, COMPARED WITH THE SEEMINGLY STRANGE AND UNEQUAL DISPENSATIONS OF HIS PROVIDENCE.

Justice obligeth to do good, to those who are good; and to inflict evil, upon those who are evil. Yet, Providence, in this life, seems to dispense affairs quite otherwise: whatsoever this world calls good, the riches, the power, the glory of it, are usually reaped upon wicked men, who swagger and flaunt it here, and fight against God with those very weapons which he puts into their hands; whereas, many of those, who are truly holy and the sincere servants of God, are oftentimes pinched by poverty, persecuted causelessly, opposed unjustly, despised and trampled upon, by every one who will but take the pains to do it. This is God's usual dealing and method with men, in this world. And it seemed so unjust and unequal, that hereupon, alone, many of the ancient heathens denied, that the world was governed by Providence. What! can I think, that a just God rules the world, when I see a wicked Dives feasting in purple, carousing on the tears of widows mingled with the blood of orphans, while a godly Lazarus, all naked and sore and hunger-starved, lies prostrate at his gate; an

object so miserable, that he needed even the charity of the very dogs that licked him? Here a grandee, a great and potent man in the world; and yet a drunkard, a swearer, an unclean wretch, a hater of God and goodness: another, perhaps, wandering about in a forlorn and destitute condition; and yet a saint, truly loving and fearing that God who afflicts him? And can there be equity in such an administration of affairs as this? It is true, indeed, that this were a charge hardly answerable, were this world the only place of dispensing rewards and punishments. There is, therefore, a judgment to come: and then, "Say ye to the righteous, that it shall be well with them; for they shall eat the fruit of their doings;" but "Woe unto the wicked!" then, "it shall be ill with them; for the reward of their works shall be given them:" Isa. iii. 10, 11. This shall be the day, wherein God will clear up the equity of his justice, in all the inequality of his providence. And what, then, are all the fine and gay things of this world? Believe it, a poor saint, who hath on him the robe of Christ's righteousness, will be found much better clothed than ever Dives was, with all his purple. What will it avail this and that gallant, that they have here ruffled and ranted it in this world? alas! they have already received their good things. Now come the afflicted, the distressed, the derided saints, to inherit the kingdom; when potentates and nobles, the great and mighty ones of the earth, shall be thrust down, screeching and howling and struggling, but all in vain, down, down, to the lowest hell. Now, oh Christian! is God unjust, because he suffers the wicked to flourish, and the godly to be afflicted, in this world? Beware, how thou judgest God, till God hath judged men: and then thou shalt see, that all his dispensations, though now they seem very unequal, are yet tempered with most exact justice and equity.

II. The JUDGE, before whom we must all appear, and by whom the sentence of life or death eternal must be pronounced upon all, is the Lord Jesus Christ.

The Scripture assigns the giving of judgment upon all, chiefly unto Him: not so, as to exclude God the Father, or God the Holy Ghost: for it is a known rule, that whatsoever action God doth without himself, is common to all the Trinity. As the whole Trinity created the world, yet creation is particularly ascribed unto Christ; so the whole Trinity shall judge the world, and yet this passing of judgment is peculiarly attributed unto Christ. And that, both because it is most fit, that he, who was judged by men, should

himself be the judge of men; and, also, because his authority will be then most visible and conspicuous before the whole world. Neither the Father nor the Spirit will make any visible appearance; but the Son shall then sit upon the throne of his majesty; and the whole world shall see him in that very body, that was buffeted, that was crucified, that was pierced, and, at last, glorified. Therefore, he is said to be the judge both of the quick and dead, because sentence shall proceed out of his mouth, and his pre-eminence and authority shall be most remarkable. So, John v. 27: God "hath given him authority to execute judgment, because he is the Son of man." Acts x. 42: "He commanded us....to testify, that it is he (Christ), who was ordained of God to be the Judge of quick and dead." 2 Tim. iv. 1: "I charge thee before God, and the Lord Jesus Christ, who shall judge the quick and the dead." Acts. xvii. 31: "He hath appointed a day, in which he will judge the world....by that man whom he hath ordained." And, if Christ be ordained judge, then,

i. WHAT TERROR THIS SPEAKS TO WICKED MEN!

Certainly, that must needs be a dark and gloomy day to them. It is that Christ, whose laws they have broken, whose love they have slighted, whose blood they have spilt, nay whose blood they have trampled on, whose members they have massacred and martyred; it is that Christ, who must then judge them: whom they have contemptuously refused to be their king and Saviour, they shall not be able to refuse from being their judge. And can you then wonder, that they should call for rocks and hills to fall upon them, and hide them "from the wrath of the Lamb?" Rev. vi. 15, 16. Believe it, rocks and hills, the hardest and the heaviest things in nature, would be but a light coverlet to them, in comparison with that wrath, which shall sit insupportably heavy on them forever, and sink them down to the bottom of hell. Christ comes now to you as a Saviour, in a meek and winning manner: he urgeth you, by all the arguments that love and pity can use: but, if you refuse him, his next coming will be as a judge; and then the lamb, which offered himself a sacrifice for you, will turn lion, and sacrifice you to his wrath and justice. Now, the voice of a loving Saviour calls sinners to come unto him; but those, who will not come, the voice of a dreadful judge will then bid to depart from him: "Depart from me, ye cursed, into everlasting fire."

ii. WHAT UNSPEAKABLE COMFORT IS THIS TO THE CHILDREN OF GOD, that Christ shall be their judge!

That Christ, in whom they have believed, whom they have loved, on whom they have trusted: that Christ, who hath dearly loved them, and given his life to redeem them, he shall judge them. And dost thou think, oh believing soul! that that Christ, who hath shed his blood to save thee, will ever spend his breath to condemn thee? Will the head execute the members? When the devil brings in his accusations, when justice calls for vengeance, then the judge himself will be your Advocate: Christ himself will plead for you. "The law of grace is, Whosoever believeth, shall not perish, but have everlasting life." Behold my blood, and their faith. The law is satisfied, the inheritance is due. And, therefore, "Come, ye blessed of my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you, from the foundation of the world."

III. Consider who shall be the ASSOCIATES.

As in human judicatories, besides the judge, there are the justices, who, for the more solemnity, sit on the bench with him; so, in this great and last assize, besides Christ, the Judge both of quick and dead, there are his associates on the bench, his assistants in the judgment: and they are the saints: 1 Cor. vi. 2: "Do ye not know, that the saints shall judge the world? and if the world shall be judged by you," &c., so, Jude, 14, 15, "The Lord cometh with ten thousand of his saints, to execute judgment upon all."

i. They must, first, be judged themselves; and, then, JUDGE OTHERS.

The blessed and joyful sentence must first be pronounced upon them; and then they, as triumphant members, will be associated with their glorious Head, in passing a dreadful and condemning sentence upon all the rest of the world, both men and devils.

1. They shall judge *the very devils themselves*.

"Know ye not, that we shall judge angels?" saith the Apostle, 1 Cor. vi. 3, that is, those "angels, which kept not their first estate, but.....reserved in everlasting chains under darkness, unto the judgment of the great day:" Jude v. 6. Here is the consummate victory of the saints. They now subdue the devil, as an enemy: then, they shall judge him, as a malefactor. They shall be revenged upon him, for all those horrid injections, violent temptations, and black and despairing apprehensions, with which he

continually molests them. What exceeding joy will it be, when those poor weak saints, who were here, on earth, in perpetual dread of him and danger from him, shall sentence him to the same damnation, into which, by his wiles and power, he labored to bring them. Now, he strongly tempts us to sin; and, if he prevail, he maliciously accuses us for yielding: but this is our happiness, that our tempter, our accuser, shall never be our judge. The time of recompense is coming: and then we shall accuse this great accuser, and complain of all the wrongs and injuries that he hath done us; what blasphemous and atheistical thoughts, what foolish and hurtful lusts, he hath stirred up in us, which were our trouble and his guilt. And, not only shall we thus accuse and complain, but we shall condemn him too; condemn him to that fire and those torments, which his very tempting of us will make far more raging and intolerable forever.

2. They shall judge *all the wicked and ungodly of the world.*

Oh! what strange amazement will seize all hearts on that day, when a few poor, despised creatures, who were thought no better of than the dung and dregs of nature; when these shall sit in state, and daunt all the great and gallant spirits of the world with a frown, and damn them with a word! Believe it, Paul will then make his judge Felix tremble, once more, at him. Let wicked men seriously consider it: they must appear shivering before those saints, whom now they hate and scorn. Pilate himself, who once judged Christ, shall, at this day, be himself judged before the meanest servant of Christ. And it is sadly to be feared, that the great and honorable nobles of the world will there find but few of their peers to judge them: no; "God hath chosen the weak things of the world to confound the.....mighty:" 1 Cor. i. 27. And, before these, all persons and causes must come. And, oh! think how dreadful it will be, that thou, perhaps, shalt be sentenced to hell by thy poor neighbor; and thou, by thy acquaintance and familiar: here, children pronounced damned by their parents, and parents by their children; husbands and wives by their yoke-fellows: and, though one so dearly loved, so nearly related, yet now sent down to hell by them, without the least yearning of compassion towards them; yea, with shouts and triumph. Thus shall the saints judge the world, both devils and wicked men.

ii. THEY SHALL NOT SO JUDGE THEM, AS CHRIST SHALL, BY AN AUTHORITATIVE PRONOUNCING OF THE SENTENCE UPON THEM. But,

1. They are said to judge the world, *because judgment shall pass*

upon all men, according to the truth of that doctrine, which they have taught and delivered.

Now, though the instructions and admonitions, which private Christians have given wicked men, shall rise up in judgment against them at the last day; yet this sense is more peculiar to the prophets, apostles, and faithful ministers of Jesus Christ, who, of all men, shall be most especially employed in this judging work. Thus Christ tells his disciples, Matt. xix. 28: "Ye shall sit upon twelve thrones, judging the twelve tribes of Israel:" that is, they shall, at last, be judged according to that doctrine ye have preached to them and taught among them. Yea, we must distinguish between Christ's judging as a prophet, and his judging as a king: Christ will, both ways, judge at the last day; by his authority as a king, and by his ministry as a prophet: and therefore he tells us, John xii. 48, "The word, that I have spoken, the same shall judge" them "in the last day:" *i. e.* it shall rise up in judgment against them. So, St. Paul, Rom. ii. 16: "God shall judge the secrets of men, by Jesus Christ, according to my gospel:" *i. e.* according to those gospel truths, which I have preached. Little do secure sinners think, when they come to the ordinances out of mere fashion and custom, that they then hear that word, which must determine their eternal state and condition: believe it, that word, which they either drowse away or scoff at, the same word of truth must judge them, at the last day. Never will there be such a repeating of sermons, as then: sermons, heard many years in the past and quite forgotten, shall then be called fresh to mind; and, what the minister spake weakly, perhaps, and faintly, conscience will then repeat in a voice more loud and dreadful than thunder. And, oh! what a sad thing will it be for ministers to see most of their flocks standing there among the goats, and to be called forth by Christ to witness against such and such of their auditors! Christ will bid us name the texts and repeat the sermons, which brought home convictions and terrors to their consciences, for those sins, which yet we could never persuade them to repent of and forsake. The drunkard, the swearer, the unclean person, the Sabbath-breaker, are sinners thick-set in every parish. Now, what should we do? If we reprove them not, if we warn them not to flee from the wrath to come, we bring their blood upon our own heads, and destroy ourselves: if we do threaten and exhort and admonish them, and they repent not; their damnation will be sevenfold deeper in hell, than if they had never enjoyed means nor ministry; because they now add contempt of the gospel to their breach of the law. It is

a very sad thing, yet so it must be, that ministers must stand forth for the condemnation of those, for whose salvation they have studied, and prayed, and labored to the very utmost. That is one way, how the saints shall judge the world, viz., by their teaching and doctrine.

2. They shall judge the world, *by the example of their lives and conversations.*

Then, oh sinner! will be seen their faith, and thy unbelief; their repentance, and thy impenitence; their obedience, and thy rebellions: and the good in them shall judge the evil in thee; and that is the reason, why wicked men do so hate it. God will, on that day, set a saint against a sinner: and, how glorious will the one appear! how ugly and loathsome the other! both are alike, by nature: both may live under the same means of grace: and yet, he, truly fearing God; thou, a despiser of God: he, a sincere professor of holiness; thou, a bitter hater of it: he, conscientious in all duties, which concern both God and man; thou, a swearer, a drunkard, a lewd profane wretch, that neither fearest God nor regardest men: and, therefore, he shall be thy judge. Nay, not only the examples of saints, but the examples of those too, who have been less vicious among wicked men themselves, shall rise up in judgment against them and condemn them: the moral virtues of the heathen shall serve to lessen their own, and to aggravate the condemnation of others, who have not arrived to their pitch: thou art called a Christian, and thinkest that name enough to pass thee at the day of trial; but, what wilt thou say, when God shall produce many heathen better than such Christians? Their temperance and sobriety shall judge thy excess and riot; their uprightness and justice, thy fraud and deceit: and all the privilege, which thou shalt get by being a Christian, is only to lie the lower and hotter in hell: our Saviour tells us, Luke xi. 31, 32, "The queen of the south, and the men of Nineveh," who, for aught we know, were never otherwise than idolatrous heathen, yet they "shall rise up in the judgment with the men of this generation, and shall condemn them."

3. The saints shall judge the world, *by giving their consent and approbation to that most righteous sentence of condemnation, which Christ shall pronounce against them.*

When Christ shall say to the goats on his left hand, "Go, ye cursed, into everlasting fire;" the saints also shall shake their hands at them, and echo it after him, "Go, ye cursed:" and subscribe, that he is just and righteous, in damning all the unbe-

lievers in the world, though many of them may be their own parents, or children, or friends, or nearest and dearest relations.

iii. And, if the saints must thus judge the world; then,

1. See here the mistaken judgment, which the world passeth upon them.

It counts them a company of poor silly souls, who have more honesty and less wit, by half, than needs. They are jeered and abused, persecuted and wronged, on all hands; and, if any forbear them, it is more out of scorn than love. Well, be it so: shortly, this jolly and frolicsome world will find itself much mistaken, when it shall see these despised ones advanced on the bench as associates with Christ, and princes and potentates stand trembling at the bar as guilty malefactors.

2. Must the saints judge the world? *How much, then, doth it behove them to be careful, that they do not commit the same crimes themselves, for which they must hereafter judge others!*

This consideration should be exceedingly effectual with all those, who pretend to be saints and hope to judge the world, to exercise a singular holiness, and live quite otherwise than the world doth. And yet, who, almost, is there, that doth not hope to be among the judges, at the last day? Ask the drunkard or swearer, ask the most profane wretch that comes to church, "Do you hope to be saved?"—"To be saved! God forbid, else. It were pity I should live, if I had not hopes to be saved." And canst thou, who tearest the holy name of God with fearful oaths and curses, think thyself a fit man to judge swearers to hell? Canst thou, who sittest swilling till wine and strong drink inflame thee, be fit to judge drunkards to hell? Canst thou, who wallowest in thy uncleanness, be fit to sit with God as a judge among whoremongers and adulterers? Certainly, if such as these be the judges, who shall be the guilty? The Apostle thought it a most absurd thing, that men should pretend to teach the law, and yet transgress it; Rom. ii. 21: "Thou, which teachest another, teachest thou not thyself? Thou, that preachest a man should not steal, dost thou steal?" so may I say, Thou, that hopest to judge others, judgest thou not thyself? Thou, that hopest to judge stealers, and liars, and adulterers, and blasphemers, and the whole rabble-rout of sinners; wilt thou steal, and lie, and commit adultery, and blaspheme, and be as bad as the worst of men? Certainly, such hopes are utterly in vain? and, instead of being judges of others,

such men shall find themselves condemned and executed as malefactors, at that day.

IV. The next general proposition was, to give a brief description of the MANNER AND METHOD of the whole transaction.

And this, indeed, shall be unspeakably glorious and majestic. Every thing in it shall be so ordered, as may make most for the terror of the wicked, and the joy and glory of the godly.

i. CHRIST'S COMING TO JUDGMENT WILL BE SUDDEN AND UNEXPECTED.

The world shall be secure; and think of no such thing, as a day of judgment. Every one shall be minding other matters: some, their trades; and some, their pleasures: and some, too, shall be sinning, when the last trumpet shall sound to judgment. Oh! how fearfully will men then be surprised! Some will be howling, and some praying; and, before they have spoken another word, be changed "in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye;" and then away through the air, to meet Christ in the clouds.

ii. For, THERE SHALL HIS THRONE BE SET, AND THERE SHALL ALL EYES BEHOLD HIM, IN THAT VERY BODY WHICH HE ASSUMED FOR US.

Acts i. 11: "This same Jesus, which is taken from you up....into heaven, shall so come in like manner as ye have seen him go into heaven." His first coming, to save the world, was mean and contemptible; but his second coming, to judge the world, shall be with the greatest glory and splendor that heaven can make. He shall set out from heaven "with a shout," given by all the hosts of heaven: 1 Thess. iv. 16. He shall come "in flaming fire, attended with his mighty angels:" 2 Thess. i. 7, 8. And all this, to strike terror into the hearts of wicked men, who shall have so great a judge to condemn them; and to fill the hearts of his own with joy, who shall have so glorious a Redeemer to save them.

iii. He WILL SEND FORTH HIS ANGELS, to assemble all nations and persons before him.

These are such officers, as none can resist, and from whom none can fly. They will come into the very graves to you; throw off your earthly covering; drag out, and drive all the wicked of the earth, though loth and struggling, by whole herds, unto the judgment seat.

iv. And, there, Christ WILL MAKE A SEPARATION between them.

The sheep, *i. e.*, those who have heard his voice, and been obedient to him, the chief shepherd of their souls, he will place, visibly, on his right hand, in a select company, by themselves: the goats, those who have followed the bent of their own lusts and wills, shall be kept together, on his left hand. Both companies expect the passing of the last and definitive sentence upon them: the one, with infinite joy and exultation, the sentence of their admission into eternal happiness; the other, with inconceivable horror, the sentence of eternal wrath. According to this different sentence, so shall presently follow its different execution: the reprobates shall be driven away by angels, and dragged away by devils; and, whether they will or no, shall be forced to torments: the elect shall attend upon Christ back again, who shall enter into heaven at the head of them, and, with rejoicing, show them all to his Father, as the children, which his eternal love had given him, and his own merits purchased.

I have not written these things to instruct any, in regard to things of which they are ignorant. I suppose, all know these first rudiments of truth. And it is a very fearful thing, to consider, that so many know the day of judgment, so certain, so dreadful, as it is held forth to be, and yet so few prepare for it. Let us be persuaded, therefore, to live as those, who must undoubtedly come to judgment, and give an account of all they have done in the flesh: otherwise, believe it, our knowledge of the day of judgment and of the great transactions which shall then be, will but make that day the more dreadful to us, and our eternal condemnation the more intolerable.

V. Consider the UNIVERSALITY of this judgment. We all, saith the text, must appear before the judgment seat of Christ.

i. All, WITHOUT EXCEPTION; and all, WITHOUT DISTINCTION.

1. *All must appear, without the exception or exemption of any* from the trial of this great day.

Rom. ii. 6, 9, 10: God "will render to every man according to his works: tribulation and anguish, upon every soul of man that doeth evil....but glory and honor....to every man that worketh good." Neither greatness, nor goodness, can privilege any man from the sentence of the Judge; no more than here they can from the arrest of death. Nay, though death seems to be as universal

as life itself: "What man is there that liveth," saith the Psalmist, "and shall not see death?" Ps. lxxxix. 48: it mows down all before it, and lays them in the dust: yet judgment is far more certain and universal, than death is. The Apostle tells us, 1 Cor. xv. 51, that "we shall not all sleep;" that is, our death-sleep: at Christ's last appearance, there shall be a world full of men, some trading and some sinning, as now they are: none of these shall taste of death: but yet they must all undergo judgment. And, therefore, we rehearse it as an article of our faith, that Christ shall come to judge both the quick, or living, and the dead. All shall hear, and all must obey, the peremptory summons of the last trump: not one soul shall then hide itself in the crowd: not one body shall skulk in the grave. But all must appear. And, though our loose dust be scattered to the four winds of heaven; yet, by the almighty power of God and the ministry of angels, every particle shall be picked up, and united again in the same body. The sea shall give up the dead, which are in it: and death and the grave shall deliver up the dead, which are in them; and every man shall be judged according to his works: Rev. xx. 13.

2. As all, without exception, so *all, without distinction*, must abide the trial of this great day.

God will be no acceptor of persons. Where the cause makes no difference, the judge will not. He will as well hear what the consciences of the greatest can say against them, as what the consciences of the meanest; and give the devil as free liberty, to accuse, to drag away, and damn princes, as peasants. Rev. xx. 12: "I saw the dead, both small and great, stand before God:" they all stand: there, no one calls, "Bring a seat here, for this emperor, and that king: make room there, for this nobleman, and that gentleman:" no; great and small, noble and contemptible, must all stand huddled, in the same common crowd, together. Indeed, there shall be no such distinction as great and small, according to worldly-eminence: there will appear great sinners, and less; and great saints, and less; but, between great persons and their inferiors, that day will know no difference: all shall there stand upon the same level: high and low, young and old, all must alike come to judgment: no reverence shall there be shown to the gray hairs of an old sinner, nor any pity to the cries of a young. Thus must all appear; without exception, and without distinction.

ii. And that, FOR THESE REASONS:

1. *All are guilty, and all are accused; and, therefore, all must be judged.*

Both God's equity, and also the clamors of our great accuser, require, that not one guilty person escape judgment. Now, the whole world is guilty before God: even infants themselves, whose souls are but just dipped into their bodies, yet thereby become partakers of original sin: others grow up under innumerable actual provocations; every day and hour adding sin to sin, and guilt to guilt. If any might escape this trial, it might seem most reasonable, that true believers should, whose guilt is removed by free pardon and justification: but, though that guilt of their sins, which exposeth and is ordained unto condemnation, be removed; yet, because those sins, which God hath pardoned them, do forever deserve condemnation, which guilt remission and justification can never take away; therefore the devil will try the suit with them; and the great day of hearing will be the day of judgment, wherein all shall be impleaded, and, therefore, all must then appear to answer.

2. *All must appear, because, on this day, God intends, most solemnly, to manifest the riches of his mercy on all the vessels of mercy, and the severity of his wrath upon all the vessels of wrath fitted for destruction.*

God hath, for this very end, decreed, that there shall be such a number of men in the world, and no more; that those two royal attributes of mercy and justice may be glorified upon them, especially in that great day. There is no part, in all eternity, so fitted to exalt mercy and justice, as this is: and, therefore, certainly, if God hath created all men to this very end, that they might be the standing monuments of these two attributes, they must all then appear, when these attributes may be most glorified. There was scarce any other reason, why God should create the world and men in it, but that the whole multitude of them, assembled together at the last day, should there serve for the glorious declaration of his justice in condemning them for their own sins, and of his mercy in saving his elect without their own merits: and, therefore, thou mayst as well not be a creature, as not appear at the judgment seat, where the great end of thy creation shall be most solemnly accomplished. And, hence it is, that our Saviour saith, John vi. 39: "This is the Father's will, which hath sent me, that of all which he hath given me I should lose nothing, but should raise it up again at the last day:" Christ shall raise them, that they may not be lost. Indeed, men were as good as lost, if they were not to rise again to judgment. It were almost lost labor

to create them, and more loss to redeem them, were it not, that the judgment of the last day shall fulfill God's ends upon them: in glorifying his love and mercy, in the view and to the admiration of the whole world, in the salvation of some; and his justice and righteousness, in the damnation of others. As sure, therefore, as God hath not been at labor in vain, in making any one man in the world; so sure shall every man in the world come to judgment.

(1) Hence it is, that believers usually pass through a fourfold justification, before they come to be perfected in glory.

[1] The first is a justification *in foro divino*, in God's own breast.

Whereby he doth, according to his secret grace, pardon their sins, and accept them into favor and unto life eternal.

[2] The second is a justification *in foro conscientie*, at the bar of their own consciences. And that is, when God's Spirit witnesseth with theirs, that they are the children of God.

When the Holy Ghost opens the book of life, before their eyes; and darts in such a beam of heavenly and supernatural light, as enables the soul clearly to read its name written therein: when they can see their election, adoption, and justification, in their sanctification; and their sanctification itself, both in the fruits of a holy life, and the testimony of God's Spirit: this is to be justified in the court of conscience. Now there is no absolute necessity of this: men's eternal state may be secured without it: but, yet, God doth thus sometimes vouchsafe to set up his judgment seat and to acquit his children in their own consciences, that so they may glorify and adore the riches of divine mercy, in choosing, in calling, such as they are, while he passeth by the far greater part of the world; and, thereby, as far as in them lies, they fulfill the end why he doth so. But the glory, that redounds to God by this justification, is but private and personal. And, therefore, there is,

[3] A third justification; and that is *in foro ecclesie triumphantis*, before all the angels and saints in heaven.

The mercy of a king, in pardoning a malefactor, is most honored, when the pardon is read in full and open court. Here is a full assembly, even "the assembly of the first-born:" and, therefore, presently upon the death of his servants, as soon as their souls return to him, he doth, for the glorifying of his mercy and free grace, pronounce them acquitted and blessed, in the audience of saints and angels.

But, neither is this an assembly full enough; there are vast

numbers of sinners on earth and wretches in hell, who know not what transactions pass above in heaven. And, therefore, to glorify pardoning mercy before them too, there shall be,

[4] A fourth justification, *pro tribunali Christi*, before the judgment-seat of Christ at the last day.

(2) Now, as there is this fourfold justification, so there is also proportionably a fourfold condemnation; and the last is before the tribunal of Christ too.

God will then assemble together angels and devils, saints and sinners, all the rational creation; that, before them, he may represent his mercy and justice, in their most conspicuous glory: his justice, in damning sinners, according to their own merits; his mercy, in saving his elect, according to the merits of Christ. And, therefore, all must then appear.

iii. And, if all must appear, then,

1. *What shame and confusion will cover the faces of wicked men, when their foul and gross sins shall be laid open before all the world of men and angels!*

This is the day, wherein the secrets of every man's heart shall be revealed, and the actions of every man's life brought to public view. "Nothing is secret," saith our Saviour, "that shall not be made manifest:" Luke viii. 17. It is manifest to God already: Ps. xc. 8: "Thou hast set...our secret sins in the light of thy countenance:" but this, wicked men blush not at: though God sees them, and sees that he may punish them; yet they are neither ashamed for his knowledge, nor afraid of his justice. That, which most awes them, is, lest the world should know how base and wicked they are: but, let them dig never so deep, to hide their sins; let them draw night and darkness round about, when they commit them; yet, foolish creatures! the whole world must know what they think to conceal: unless thou canst find out such an obscure and retired corner, where neither God, nor the devil, nor thine own conscience can follow thee; it is but childish to sin in secret: as good commit it on the housetop, in the face of the sun, in the concourse of people; for, if God, and the devil, and thine own conscience know it, the whole world must know it. Nay, the whole world of men, now living, are nothing, in comparison with the endless numbers of those, who must know thy greatest and vilest sins: all, who have ever lived from the foundation of the world, or shall until the final dissolution of it, shall hear the black catalogue of thy sins read over, sin by sin. Yea, the very sin

of thy thoughts shall be disclosed: at such a time, blasphemy: at such a time, murder: at such a time, filthy lusts. Oh! whither wilt thou cause thy shame to go? Where wilt thou hide thy head? Think, oh sinner! how wilt thou be able to look up, when God shall read aloud this long scroll of thy sins, in the hearing of patriarchs, prophets, and apostles, and all the world, both of good and bad? Who shall as distinctly see thee, as though thou wert the only person to be then judged; and as thoroughly know thee, who thou art, under what education thou wast brought up, under what ministry thou hast lived, and what profession thou hast made, as though they had always been conversant with thee here on earth. Oh! the shame and amazement, which will then seize sinners, when God shall thus set their iniquities before their faces, to their everlasting confusion! It is indeed questioned, whether the sins of God's children shall be made public, at the day of judgment, to all the world: some deny it; because they think it unlikely, that God should uncover those sins in judging, which he hath already covered in justifying: but this proves it not; for, justification only covers our sins from condemnation, not from manifestation: it covers them from God's justice; but it doth not cover them from the world's notice: and, therefore, I think it most probable, that the sins of God's best saints and people, shall, in this universal judgment, be made known to all, both men and angels: the text tells us, that all must give an account of what they have done in the flesh, whether it be good or bad; and, besides, the sins of God's children and of wicked men are so entangled together, by many circumstances, that the one cannot be fully made known, without the other: nor yet will this expose them to shame; for that shall be fully swallowed up in the joy which they shall then have, that God is glorified: as they shall not grieve at the damnation of their dearest friends, because God's justice is glorified, in their destruction; so neither shall they be ashamed at the publishing of their own sins to all the world, because the mercy of God shall be thereby glorified before all the world, in their pardon.

2. *Since our appearing at the judgment seat of Christ is so necessary, how much doth it concern us, to endeavor that it may be joyful!* And, how may this be accomplished, but,

(1) By laboring, in all things, to keep a good conscience void of offense, both towards God and towards men; so to walk, that our hearts may never reproach us while we live, nor our consciences condemn us when we die?

"Our rejoicing is this," saith the Apostle, even "the testimony

of" a good "conscience:" 2 Cor. i. 12. And, if this be our rejoicing here on earth, this also will be our joy and glory at the great day.

(2) But, because there is no man living so perfect, but his own conscience may accuse him here, and will there bring in witness against him, of many sins he hath committed; therefore, if we would appear with joy at the judgment seat, let us labor to procure an interest in Christ, the judge.

Then, when thou standest at the great bar, thou mayst boldly throw out that challenge of the Apostle, "Who shall lay any thing to my charge?" If the devil, if thy own conscience answer, "Yes, we can: we can lay such and such sins to thy charge:" yea, but it is Christ that justifies: who shall condemn me? His merits, his righteousness, are mine; and, therefore, so is the glory purchased by them. This is that, which, when others shall call for rocks and hills to fall upon them and to hide them from the wrath of the Lamb, will make us lift our heads with joy, knowing that our redemption is drawn nigh.

VI. Consider FOR WHAT THINGS ALL MEN MUST BE JUDGED, and what account they must give; and that is, for all things. They must receive, saith the text, according to all they have done in the body, whether it be good or bad.

But, neither doth this seem fully to comprehend the whole scope and latitude of this judgment. But they shall be judged according to three things, viz., what they have done out of the body; what they have been in the body; what they have done in the body. Now, because most of the judgment will be taken up in examining this last; therefore, the Apostle, in the text, mentions only this; though, indeed, we must pass under account for the other two also.

i. We must be judged, FOR WHAT WE HAVE DONE OUT OF THE BODY.

I am far from Origen's opinion, who fancied that the souls of all men were existent, and did either merit or demerit, long before their union to their bodies. Neither do I think, that we shall give account for what our souls do, when they are separate from our bodies, in the space between the day of our death and the day of judgment: for the actions of the soul, either in heaven or hell shall not be rewardable, but shall be part of the reward itself. As the blasphemies of the damned souls, now in hell, shall not be

farther punishable; because they are there one part of their punishment: so neither shall the praises and hallelujahs of the blessed saints, in heaven, be farther rewarded; for these themselves are part of their reward.

And, yet, though our souls were not existent before they were joined to our bodies; and, although we shall not be accountable, for what they do when they shall be parted from it: yet we must all undergo judgment, for what we have done out of the body. You will ask me, "What can this be?" Indeed, it is but one action; and that is the very first transgression, which was ever committed by man against God. Though this act were done some thousands of years since, yet the guilt of it still passeth down along upon us. Other sins we are guilty of by commission; of this, by imputation: of others, in our persons; of this, in our representative. And, yet, for this, as well as others, we must be answerable in that great day. As Christ's satisfaction is imputed to all believers, who are his spiritual offspring, as theirs; and may be so pleaded by them, at the day of judgment: so is Adam's first transgression imputed to all his natural offspring, as theirs; and it will be so charged upon them at that day. The covenant of grace entitles us to the righteousness of Christ, through our mystical union with him by faith: the covenant of works entails Adam's guilt upon us, through our natural union with him, as our common parent; which gave him power to appear for us as our federal head, and to oblige us to stand or fall, according to the terms of the agreement entered into with God, not only for himself, but for all his posterity. All the world, which is now spread into so many thousand persons and families, lay all wrapped up together in his loins; and, when he lifted up his hand, in rebellion against God his Maker, he had the whole world of hands and hearts joining with him. Never was there any conspiracy against heaven, so general as that: for, in him, all sinned, saith the Apostle, Rom. v. 12: they were sinners in him, before they were creatures in themselves. Such early rebels were we against God, that we began to sin, when we were scarce any thing besides a motion.

This is that, which but few consider, and fewer lament; and, yet, this is that, which we have done out of our bodies, for which we must give an account: Rom. v. 18: "By the offense of one, judgment came upon all men to condemnation." And, certainly, this one sin hath brought a judgment of condemnation upon all, and will likewise bring upon all a judgment of trial and examination.

At this day, Adam shall stand forth at the head of all his wretched posterity; and God shall once more arraign him, as he did Gen. iii. 11: "Hast thou eaten of the tree, whereof I commanded thee that thou shouldst not eat?" Not he only, but the whole world with him, must then cry out, "Guilty! Guilty!" For other sins, particular persons must make particular answers: but, when this action comes to be tried, what an outcry will there be of all the world, at once confessing guilt and suing for mercy!

ii. All must be judged, **FOR WHAT THEY HAVE BEEN IN THE BODY.**

This is a day, wherein men's states shall be tried, as well as their actions. There are but two states, in which all men are: a state of nature, or a state of grace; of life, or death eternal. We are all by nature children of wrath, and heirs of perdition: that is our state: and the great question, in this judgment, will be, whether we have lived and died in this state, or not. This life is the only season allotted us for the changing of our state: now, or never to eternity, mayst thou, of a rebel, become a son; of an heir of perdition, be made an heir of glory: now, or never, may we have our natures renewed, our hearts sanctified, grace implanted, lusts subdued, and heaven and happiness secured to us. And, yet, how many of us are there, whose lives are well nigh spent, and yet whose natures are not hitherto changed! who have death breeding in their very vitals, and yet have not Christ formed in their hearts! Eternal woe unto such, if God snatch them hence in a sinful, unregenerate state; for, according to the state in which death finds them, so shall judgment pass upon them.

And yet, oh desperate madness and folly of men, who, by wretched sloth and willful neglects and endless delays, put it to the venture, whether God will not damn them the very next hour! Be persuaded to pass a judgment upon yourselves, upon your state, before God comes to do it. What think you, whose image and superscription do you bear? Do you belong to God, or to the devil? Hath there a mighty change from an almighty grace passed upon you, or are you still the same you were? What is your state? Is it a state of spiritual blindness and spiritual death, or are you changed from darkness to light, and raised from death to life? Listen! what say your hearts to this? Do they not generally suggest to you, that as yet you find no such mighty change wrought in you; but yet you hope it may be wrought time enough for your salvation? Speak out: is not this the very

answer, which many of your hearts give you? And, what! will you hazard the sentence of the dreadful judgment upon "it may be?" It may be, God may change thy state and nature; but may it not likewise be, that God may cut thee off, and summon thee to judgment in thy old and sinful state, and pronounce sentence upon thee as thou shalt then be found?

Me thinks, this should prevail with all of us, since the judgment must proceed according to the state in which death finds and leaves us; and, if our state be not now this moment changed, death may possibly seize us before it can be changed: this, I say, should prevail with us to give neither God nor ourselves any rest, till we are passed from death to life, from the power of Satan unto God. It is then too late to seek for oil, when the bridegroom is already come: too late to call and cry, "Lord, Lord, open unto us," when the door is already shut. The door of hope is forever shut against us, as soon as we enter into the gates of death. If death find thee out of a state of grace, judgment will certainly leave thee in a state of condemnation.

iii. All must be judged, FOR WHAT THEY HAVE DONE IN THE BODY, whether it be good or bad.

Nothing, that hath been done in the world, shall always lie buried in oblivion. As there shall be a general resurrection of men, so shall there be a resurrection of their actions too. Then shall be known the true and complete history of the world: it is a natural and strong desire which we have, to be acquainted with what hath been done in the ages past before us: what great actions great persons have performed: at this day, we shall receive punctual information; and hear every one relate himself the story of his own life. Here, all the hidden mysteries of iniquity will be brought to light: those secret sins, which have been concealed from the eyes of men, shall then be proclaimed aloud in their ears: we must give God a strict account, and the whole world a perfect narrative, of them all: Rom. xiv. 12: "Every one of us shall give account of himself to God:" and, 1 Cor. iii. 13: "Every man's work shall be made manifest; for the day shall declare it:" all the wickednesses over which men have brooded, and hatched in the darkest vaults of their own hearts, or acted in the most obscure secrecy, shall be then made as manifest, as if they were every one of them written on their foreheads, with the point of a sunbeam. Here, on earth, none know so much of us, neither would we that they should, as our own consciences; and, yet, those

great secretaries, our own consciences, what through ignorance or searedness, overlook many sins which we commit; of which, at that day, they shall be informed. But our own consciences shall not know more of us, than all the world shall: for all, that hath been done, shall be brought into public notice; and we must give a most strict and particular account of all.

We must give an account for all: but this account will be most dreadful and terrible, when God comes to reckon with us upon these following particulars.

1. We must give an account *for all the sins which we have committed, and of which we have not repented.*

There is not a sin we commit, but God sets it down in his book of remembrance. There they all stand, written down in order, under every one of our names. Now, as we truly repent of any sin, so God blots it out: Acts iii. 19: "Repent ye, therefore..... that your sins may be blotted out, when the times of refreshing shall come from the presence of the Lord:" that is, "Repent," that so, at the day of judgment, the great debt-book may be found crossed and blotted, and not one sin legible against you to your condemnation. But, oh! what horror will seize on impenitent wretches in that day, when God shall open the debt-book to them, and show them so many thousand sins standing all upon account, not one of them crossed out; not a tear of their own, nor so much as a drop of blood from Christ, to make one blot! It is easy and joyful to account for a crossed debt; to see, as true believers do, how much was once owing, and how much is now paid for: but, when wicked men shall see themselves chargeable with so many thousand talents, what else can they expect, but presently to be cast into that prison, whence they shall not come forth, till they have paid the uttermost farthing?

2. As we must account for sins not repented of, so *for duties slightly and hypocritically performed.*

Indeed, many seem to provide against this danger: how is it possible, that they should give an account of their duties, who think not of what they say, nor of what they do, while they are performing them? But, yet, believe it, God writes down your prayers, word for word, after you; and he makes observations on them too: at such a petition, the heart ran gadding after a vain and foolish thought, that came across it; and left the lips to walk alone: at such a confession, while the tongue spake bitter things against sin, yet the heart embraced and cherished it. Though men pray so, as that they scarce hear themselves, nor regard what

themselves utter: yet, certainly, God hears them, and God regards them; not, indeed, so as to accept them, but so as to judge them for duties performed in a manner so careless and slovenly. And, that holy and reverend name of God, which they mutter over without either fear or affection, he will then severely vindicate; when taking his name in vain in a duty, shall be as strictly accounted for, as blaspheming his name in an oath.

3. We must account *for all the ordinances and means of grace, under which we have sat unprofitably.*

Then it will be reckoned up against us, that, at such a time, we heard the terrors of the law denounced, and yet were not frightened by them: at such a time, the mercy of the gospel, the all-sufficiency and willingness of Christ to save us, and yet were not affected by it. Nay, these very discourses of the day of judgment must, at that day, be accounted for; whether you have been persuaded by them, so to prepare your accounts, that you may be able to give them up with joy, at this great and terrible day.

4. You must reckon *for every talent entrusted to you*, whether you have husbanded it for your Lord's advantage. God affords you means of grace to receive good, and he lends you talents to do good; and you must give an account of the right improving of both.

Is it *authority and power* as a magistrate, that God hath given thee? He will, at this day, call thee to account, how thou hast used it; what vice thou hast suppressed; what zeal thou hast shown in revenging God's honor, upon daring and impudent miscreants: whether thou hast punished the wickedness, not only of poor, trembling inferiors, but of proud and potent sinners; who make it their sport to baffle authority, and, as they deny the God of heaven, so deride and scorn the gods of the earth. God will call thee to account, whether they have been a terror to thee, or thou to them; what reformation thou hast wrought in the place where thou livest; what crimes, by thy cowardly connivance, thou hast made thine own, and brought upon thine own soul. Shall there a drunkard reel home unpunished; his drunkenness is thine. Shall a blasphemous swearer rend and tear the holy name of the great God, by his execrable oaths and curses, and yet escape; his oaths are thine, and all his curses will fall heavy on thine own head. Shalt thou know of any abominable lewdness and filthiness committed within the verge of thy power, and not execute vengeance for it; thou thyself art guilty of it. Shalt thou know any who profane the Lord's day, and those holy ordinances which

are thereon celebrated, and not vindicate the honor and worship of that God from whom thou hast received thy authority; thou art thyself the Sabbath-breaker, and, by not reproving and punishing the works of darkness in others, makest thyself a partaker of them, as the Apostle speaks, Eph. v. 11. For these things, the great God will bring thee to a strict and particular account; and, according as men's authority and the abuse of it have been the greater, so likewise shall their punishment be in hell; and, that they may not lose by their place and dignity, they shall be preferred to the next in torments, to Beelzebub, the prince of the devils.

Is it *wealth* and *riches*, with which God hath entrusted you? Know, that thou art but God's steward, and the keeper of his purse for the poor and needy. Thou art mistaken, if thou lookest upon what thou hast to be thine own, and at thine own disposal: no; it is only given thee to employ for thy Master's advantage; and he will reckon with thee for every farthing of thy estate, whether spent upon thy vain pleasures, or in refreshing the bowels of his poor saints and members. If either, by thy covetousness, thou hast dammed up and stopped the current of God's bounty that hath flown in upon thee, and kept it from overflowing upon others also; or hast turned it aside into wrong channels, and hast profusely lavished out that plenty with which God hath blessed thee, in riot, excess, and debauchery, maintaining thy lusts at God's charge; be assured, that every penny of this ill-kept or ill-spent estate, shall, in this great day of judgment, prove a talent, but a talent of lead, to sink thy soul deep forever, in the lake of fire and brimstone.

Or, hath God given thee *spiritual gifts*, tending more immediately unto edification? Assuredly, God will inquire, at this day, whose ignorance thou hast informed, whose deadness thou hast quickened, whose heart thou hast warmed by holy and heavenly discourses, whom thou hast converted from the error of his ways, or forwarded in the way of holiness and salvation. And, if it shall be then found, that thou hast been an unprofitable servant, and hid thy talent; nay, it may be not only so, but a wasteful servant, and spent it; mayst thou not fear, lest the same doom should pass upon thee at the day of judgment, as did upon him: Matt. xxv. 30? "Cast him into outer darkness: there shall be weeping, and gnashing of teeth."

5. We must give an account of *all the providences, that have be-*

fallen us in our whole life, both in a way of mercy and judgment; and what effect each hath had upon us.

Whether mercies have made us more thankful and fruitful; whether judgments have made us more humble and penitent; whether the cords of God's love have drawn us, or his rod hath driven us nearer to him. There is not one dispensation of God's providence, but it hath some influence upon our spiritual and eternal state and condition; either it proves a help or a hindrance to a holy life: either it unites the heart nearer unto God, or else alienates it more from him. And what use we have made of every providence, will be one great inquiry of this great day. Thou hast been delivered from many dangers, and from many deaths: God will examine, whether thou hast given up thy life to the service of that God, who hath rescued it from the very brink of destruction; or hast looked upon thyself as one delivered only to commit far greater abominations than ever before. God, it may be, hath laid sore and heavy afflictions upon thee: this day must give account, whether thou hast, with a meek spirit, patiently submitted to his visitation, and, in the calmness and serenity of thy soul, satisfied thyself in the infinite wisdom and goodness of God; his wisdom, whereby he knows what is best for us; his goodness, whereby he will do that to us, which he knoweth to be best: or hast galled thy shoulders, by striving with thy yoke; vexed and roaring like a wild bull in a net; fretting and exasperating thyself against God and providence, and, in the time of thy distress, sinning yet more against him: whether, when God, by his judgments, hath ploughed thee up, and made long furrows upon thee, this ploughing hath only made thee more rough and uneven, or hath prepared thee to bring forth the fruits of righteousness, unto the praise and glory of God. This also will be brought to trial at the great day of judgment.

6. We must give an account *of the motions of the Holy Ghost, and the convictions of our own consciences*, whether we have cherished or stifled them.

And, assuredly, at that day, conscience will be very mindful to inform against us, in this particular. How many good motions, and holy purposes and resolutions, have we murdered in their very infancy! our hearts have been both their womb and tomb: they have been buried in the same place, where they were conceived. When conscience hath reproved us, how often have we stopped its mouth, and offered violence to it! well! at this day it will revenge itself, and give in dreadful accusations against you, for not suffer-

ing it now to give you necessary reproof. Then, it will show the bloody wounds and deep gashes, that all your willful sins have made in it: and, depose against you, how often you have striven against the strivings of God's Spirit; how often you have desperately rushed into those crimes, from which it would have withheld you; and most recklessly omitted those duties, of the necessity of which you were fully convinced. And, sad and dreadful will that account be, which we must then give of all those holy motions, which have been stifled to death in us.

7. We must give an account of *those numberless sins of our thoughts and words*, which, as slight as we reckon them, must pass under particular examination, as well as the more observable actions of our lives.

(1) Our thoughts claim now a privilege of being exempted from man's judgment and censure.

They lie hid in the inmost recesses and retirements of our souls, whither no created eye can reach to discover them. But, at this day, those naked and unfledged sins, those lusts which lie like beds of knotted and crawling serpents in our hearts, shall be brought forth to see the light: "For there is nothing covered, that shall not be revealed; and hid, that shall not be known:" Matt. x. 26; "In the day when God shall judge the secrets of men by Jesus Christ:" Rom. ii. 16. Hypocrisy, and fair pretenses, and a smooth life and conversation, do oftentimes put such a varnish upon a rotten heart, that we cannot now, without uncharitableness, judge ill of its thoughts and intentions: but, as it fares with painted faces, bring them to the fire, and their paint and daubing will shrivel up and fall off: so, as to these formal hypocrites, when heaven and earth shall be all on a flame about them, the scorching force of this great fire will make all their paint fall off, and expose the very thoughts of their hearts, a naked and a loathsome spectacle to the whole world. Then we must give an account to God, for all those atheistical, blasphemous, bloody, and unclean thoughts, that have bubbled up in our hearts: what entertainment we have given them: whether we have, with abhorrence and detestation, cast that filth back in the devil's face; or, have sat brooding on those cockatrice's eggs, and enjoyed those sins in contemplation, which, for shame or outward restraints, we durst not commit in outward act. Believe it, how fond or favorable soever we may be towards these first-born of our hearts, looking upon our thoughts as thin aerial things, and but as shadows cast by our minds and fancies; yet, certainly, in God's account, who is a spirit, these

spiritual wickednesses are as substantial crimes and solid iniquities, as those others, which are branded with infamy and scandal among men.

(2) We must give an account for every word which we have spoken.

What a dreadful echo shall we then hear, when all our vain, rotten, unsavory discourses shall be repeated in our ears, louder than the voice of thunder! It is a terrible place, Matt. xii. 36! "I say unto you, that every idle word that men shall speak, they shall give account for it in the day of judgment." An idle word: that is, a word spoken to no commendable end or purpose. Our vain, frothy, light, and wanton discourses, all our superfluous tattle, every word that might be better spared than spoken, shall be reckoned for at this great day. How much more, then, our filthy and rotten communication; oaths, and curses, and blasphemies; backbitings, revilings, and malicious slanders; and such speeches, as leave the very soot of hell in the mouths that utter them! how much more severely shall men account for these! Oh! with what a just and strict God have we to deal! And, how deep have our own tongues set us on the score! We have talked ourselves in debt unto divine justice; and every vain, frivolous, and impertinent word, stands as an item to increase the reckoning that we must then make. Oh Lord! set thou a watch upon the doors of our lips, and guide thou the moving of our tongues, that they may not now be set on fire of hell, nor hereafter set on fire in hell.

Now, when we shall be reckoned with for sins, which we have committed and not repented of; for duties, which we have performed slightly and hypocritically; for ordinances and means of grace, under which we have sat unprofitably; for gifts and talents, which we have not husbanded; for providences, which we have not improved; for the convictions of our own consciences and the motions of God's Spirit, which we have not seconded; for the vanity of our thoughts, the superfluity and frothiness of our words; alas! what account can we give of these things? We cannot answer the demands of God's justice, for one of a thousand. And, therefore, as when Alcibiades went to visit Pericles, but was refused admission, with this excuse, that he was then busy studying, how to give up his accounts to the state; "Tell him," saith he, "that it were wiser for him to study how he might give no account:" so, truly, since we can give no good account, it will be our wisdom to study, how we may give no account, nor be our-

selves answerable for what we have done. This can no otherwise be, than by getting an interest in Jesus Christ, that he may answer, and make up our accounts for us at that day; and, at every item reckoned up against us, may say, that it is discharged, blotted, and crossed out, by his own most precious blood. This is the only way for us, who are such desperate debtors, to appear with confidence before our great creditor.

VII. Let us now, in the seventh place, consider ACCORDING TO WHAT LAW this judgment must pass upon us.

A law consists of two parts; a precept, or prohibition; and a promise, or threatening. According to the former, it is a rule to direct the obedience of the subject; according to the latter, it is a rule to direct the proceedings of the judge. The precept and prohibition are given to regulate our actions; and God hath added the promise and threatening, as that, according to which he will regulate his justice.

Now, that we may not, at this great day, miscarry in point of law, as being ignorant either of what we ought to do now, or what our judge will do then, I shall endeavor to show you what that law is, according to which sentence must be pronounced upon all.

There is, therefore, a twofold law, by which men shall be judged; unwritten, and written. Or, if you will, both are written: the one, upon the heart; the other, in the word.

i. There is the UNWRITTEN LAW, OR THE LAW THAT IS WRITTEN ONLY UPON THE HEART.

And this consists in those practical principles, which are deeply engraven upon the consciences of the heathen; and which neither tract of time nor custom of sinning could ever utterly erase. This is that light in the understanding, which naturally discovers good and evil: that voice in the conscience, which exhorts and admonishes, comforts and terrifies, accuses or excuses; being itself both law, judge, and witness, in a man's own bowels.

This unwritten or natural law, for the substance and matter of it, is the same with the moral law contained in the Scriptures. It requires the performance of the duties of religion, towards God; the duties of sobriety, towards ourselves; and the duties of love and charity, towards others. All these, even the unwritten law, and those common notions in the hearts of heathens themselves, did strictly command and enforce. So the Apostle, Rom. ii. 14:

"The Gentiles, which have not the law, do, by nature, the things contained in the law, these, having not the law, are a law unto themselves:" that is, though they have not the written law promulgated among them; yet, the unwritten law of nature prompted them to the performance of what is contained in the written law. And this shows, saith he, ver. 15, "the work of the law written in their hearts:" the work of the law was written in their hearts, when as the words of the law were not written in their books.

But, though this be the same for the sum of it, yet it is not so perfect and entire as the written law is. The ruins of the great fabric do not so fully represent it, as an artificial draught taken by some skillful pencil: in which we may see the whole proportion, and every part of it expressed exactly. This great and stately fabric is man, in his first creation. The written law is a perfect draught of him, taken by the hand of God himself; and exactly represents what he was, while he stood in his beauty and perfection. The unwritten law is the ruins of this great fabric, upon which there are still left some prints and footsteps of its former state and glory. Something there is, which shows what man once was, and directs what man should be; yea, so much, that it is both a wonder and a shame to Christians, that many heathen, who have had none other guide, have left behind them such examples of a singular and exalted virtue, as few among us are either able or willing to imitate.

This unwritten law, or the law of nature, is that, whereby the heathen shall be judged at the last day. No law is obligatory, till it hath received a sufficient promulgation: for, if it lie locked up in the magistrat's cabinet and be not made public, it binds no man either to obedience or punishment: now, it was impossible, that either the law of Moses or the doctrine of Christ should, in former ages, have been made known to all the remote heathen on earth, unless it were by miracle: the greatest part of the world was not known to be, or to be inhabited, to the Jews, or to Christians that lived in former days: and, therefore, the knowledge of the law or gospel could not be conveyed to them, unless God should delegate some angel to such an extraordinary ministry, which, it is certain, he never did: and, therefore, this law, which they knew not of, this gospel, which was never preached among them, could not oblige them either to obedience unto God, or to faith in our Lord Jesus Christ. When they sin, they transgress not the law of Moses, unless it be materially only; but, formally, they transgress the law

of their own natural light and reason. And, certainly, that law, which they sin not against, shall not be the law by which they must be judged: so saith the Apostle, speaking of the heathen, Rom. ii. 12; "As many as have sinned without the law," *i. e.*, without the written law of Moses, "shall also perish without the law; and as many as have sinned in the law, shall be judged by the law." And the very same may be said of the gospel also: it will not be required of the heathen, in this great day, to produce their faith: though the Athenians, in their blind superstition, built an altar unto the unknown God; yet, certainly, it is not possible, that faith should fix upon an unknown Saviour: no; unbelief will be but the sin of a few men, although it will be the condemnation of the most Christians; and that, because those, who are called Christians, are but a few, in comparison with those endless multitudes, who have never heard of the name or the doctrine of Christ, and therefore shall not be judged for rejecting either him or it. The great question, that shall be put to these men, will be, whether they have lived and acted according to the dictates of right reason? Whether they have followed the conduct of their natural light, and obeyed the commands of their natural conscience; or, whether they have gone contrary to it; damping their light, stifling their convictions, and imprisoning the truth in righteousness?

Thus shall the heathen, and they alone, be judged according to the light within them; because they had no other duty incumbent upon them, than to follow that light: which, while some fanatical people now-a-days among us cry up as the only rule for practice and guide to happiness, they do what in them lies, to reduce themselves back to the state and condition of the heathen; and, for such, they may be reckoned, for they can scarce, without an abuse, be called Christians.

And if the heathen shall, at last, be thus judged according to the law of nature, then may we here learn,

1. *What to judge concerning their salvation.*

It is not want of charity, but the evidence of truth, which makes us believe, that not one of them can, in an ordinary manner, be saved: I say, in an ordinary manner, because, whether God hath not or may not, in an extraordinary way, reveal Christ to some particular persons among them, is not for us to determine: I would, it were more probable, than it seems to be. But, if God proceed with none of them in this world, in any other than an ordinary way, certain it is, though sad, that when he comes to judge them, they must be all cast and condemned. Acts iv. 12. There is

salvation in no other, but in Christ; "for there is none other name under heaven, given among men, whereby we must be saved:" and, therefore, if Christ hath not been made known to them by a miracle, (which is too unlikely,) judgment must sadly pass against them. And, what a sad thing is it, to consider, that incomparably the greatest part of the world, many of them endowed with gifts to be admired, many of them adorned with virtues scarce to be imitated, grave, and wise, and learned, and temperate, and public-spirited heathen, must, perhaps, all perish, not having the gospel, which alone can discover to them the way of life and salvation! Oh! the justice and severity of God! "How unsearchable are his judgments, and his ways past finding out!" Now, it appears clearly, that if God will judge them according to their own light, they will be found guilty; from this reason, because the will of man is more corrupted by the fall, than his understanding and conscience is: so that those things, which we have light enough to discover to be our duty, we have not will enough to perform. There is no mere man in the world, nor ever was, who fully lived up to his convictions. And, therefore, though the heathen shall be tried by nothing else but the light of reason and the law of nature; yet this is enough to condemn them, for not living answerably to the dictates thereof. So the Apostle, Rom. i. 20, 21, 32: "They are without excuse, because that when they knew God, they glorified him not as God:" and, "Knowing the judgment of God, that they, which commit such things are worthy of death, not only do the same, but have pleasure in them that do them."

2. This may inform us *what to judge*, as concerning their salvation, so *concerning their condemnation*.

If they shall not be judged for unbelief, for neglecting so great salvation as Christ hath purchased and the gospel tendered, then, certainly, their condemnation will be much more tolerable, than the condemnation of unbelieving Christians. What saith our Saviour, John xv. 22? "If I had not come and spoken unto them, they had not had sin." All the sins committed against the holiness of the law, are as none in comparison with the great sin of lighting the mercy of the gospel. And, therefore, we find that Sodom and Gomorrah, for whose monstrous wickedness God rained hell out of heaven itself, are yet said to be more tolerably punished than Bethsaida, and Chorazin, and Capernaum shall be, at the day of judgment; Matt. xi. 22, 23. Why! what is their sin, but only that Christ preached unto them and wrought miracles

among them; and yet they repented not, they believed not? This comes to judge, and expose them to a far more intolerable condemnation, than the vile and horrid lusts of a heathenish Sodom. "Thou, Capernaum," saith our Saviour, "which art exalted unto heaven, shalt be brought down to hell:" lifted up to heaven, in privileges; and thrown down to hell, in punishments. Believe it, whosoever goes down to hell with the load of Church privileges and Church ordinances upon him, will never leave sinking and sinking, till he comes to the very bottom. And, assure yourselves, whosoever lies uppermost, yet the bottom of hell shall be paved with Christians.

The heathen, therefore, shall be judged, at the last day, by the unwritten law; the law and light of nature remaining in their consciences: and, hence, their condemnation is, in an ordinary way, more inevitable; but shall also be more tolerable, than the condemnation of others.

ii. There is a WRITTEN LAW, whereby all, who live within the sound and notice of it, must be judged.

And that is twofold: either the law of works; or the law of faith: or, if you will, both these are but one law of works: the one, as fulfilled by us in our own persons: the other, as fulfilled by us in Christ. The voice of the law of works is, "Do this, and live."

Now, the truth is, though believers have been guilty of numberless transgressions; yet they may be very well content to be tried by this law: and that, because, though they have transgressed this law, yet it is no contradiction to affirm, that they have fulfilled it too. In themselves, personally considered, they have transgressed it: in Christ, mystically considered, they have fulfilled it. And oh! what an unspeakable comfort will it be, when the devil shall in that great day, inveigh against us and accuse us of many thousand sins, that we may, under a blessed distinction, give him the lie! we are not transgressors, but fulfillers of the law: we have done what is required; for Christ, our Saviour, hath done it; and Christ and we are one. Now, although, according to this sense, believers may stand acquitted in judgment, even by the law of works; yet the Scripture doth rather choose to express the transgressions of that great day, to be according to the law of works or faith; that is, according to the tenor of the law or gospel.

1. This is the unspeakable comfort of all true believers, that,

this great day, they *shall not be judged by the law of works, according to its literal sense; but by the gospel.*

The tenor of the gospel is, "Whosoever believeth, shall be saved." The reason of all that Christ hath done in the world, why he took upon him the form of a servant, why he underwent the death of a malefactor, lies couched in this, that believers might obtain eternal life. This is the depth of that mystery, into which angels pry: this is the sum of that ministry, which is committed unto us: this is the form of that trial, which must pass upon you, whether you have received Christ by faith, who hath been revealed and tendered to you in the gospel. It will then be but a vain and fruitless labor, for the devil to heap up accusations against us: for, though the law saith, "the soul that sinneth, it shall die;" yet faith will then remove the suit from God's common bar, to his court of equity, if I may so speak; from the letter of the law, to the more equitable construction of it. And here it will be found, that you have already satisfied the law: you, in Christ, have done it; and therefore stand free from its condemnation.

2. Unbelievers shall, at the last day, be judged *by both these laws*; both by the law of works and the law of faith: and, what will be to their inconceivable horror, both will condemn them.

The severity of the law casts them: the mercy of the gospel cannot relieve them. When God shall ask them, how they will be tried; by the law, or by the gospel; if they say, by the law, that tells them, "Cursed is every one, that continueth not in all things," written in it, "to do them:" tell me, are ye so well persuaded and confident of your own righteousness and innocence, that you will stand to this sentence? Will you venture the everlasting state of your souls upon this trial, that you cannot be proved guilty of any transgression? And, if your own consciences now accuse you, will they not much more, think you, accuse you then? Will you appeal to the gospel? That tells you, "He, that believeth not, is condemned already:" John iii. 18: and, "He, that believeth not.....the wrath of God abideth on him:" John iii. 36: nay, let me tell you, the gospel will be so far from relieving you, that it will but add to the condemnation of the law: the law sentenceth sinners to hell, for transgressing it; but, then, the gospel lays on more load, and heats the furnace sevenfold hotter for those, who have not only violated the law, but rejected pardon. He dies deservedly, who, being condemned by the law of the prince, slights his mercy too. This is the case of every un-

believer: they are all condemned, by law: God tenders them a pardon: Christ offers himself for their Saviour, his blood for their ransom: this Saviour they reject: on this blood they trample, and even dare God to do his worst. And, therefore, there is no one sin in the world, that carries so much provocation in it, as this of unbelief doth: it is an injury done to the tenderest of God's attributes, his mercy: it is an affront upon his dearest Son, the Lord Jesus Christ; and, therefore, shall be revenged with a most aggravated condemnation. Oh! then, what fears and terrors will encompass them round, who, when the law hath condemned them for transgression, shall find themselves much more condemned for unbelief! The blood of Christ is not shed in vain: not a drop of it is spilt upon the ground, as water that cannot be gathered up again: it will, certainly, either justify, or condemn; either save, or destroy. And look, of what efficacy it is, to remove guilt from the souls of true believers: of the like efficacy it is, to bring guilt upon the souls of unbelievers: if, therefore, the blood of Christ, applied by faith, has power to remove the guilt of all the sins which we have committed: the same blood, rejected by unbelief, will bring in a greater and sorer guilt upon us, than all the sins which we have committed besides. Be persuaded, therefore, never to leave praying and waiting, till the God of all grace be pleased to work this precious grace of faith in thee; without which, thou canst neither please him, nor be well-pleasing to him: that so, the blood of Jesus Christ may, in that great day, be found upon thy heart, for thy justification; and not upon thy head, for thy condemnation.

VIII. In the eighth place, consider, who shall then appear, to ACCUSE and WITNESS against us.

Men shall have a fairer trial before Christ's tribunal, than Christ himself had before man's. The Scripture tells us, that many false witnesses were suborned, to accuse him. And, it seems, their rage against him made them forget that principal rule of lying, viz., that it be uniform and congruous: for it is said, that their witnesses "agreed not together." But, when we come to judgment, we shall have nothing to except against the undoubted truth of the witnesses: yea, and though they are of different interests and natures; yet their depositions against us shall punctually agree.

i. GOD'S KNOWLEDGE shall, at that day, give in clear and positive evidence against us.

And this is such a witness, as none can suspect or challenge of falsehood. He is privy to all we do: for all things are open and naked to his eyes: Heb. iv. 13. It is as impossible to conceal any thing from his notice, as it is to do any thing without his permission. Every action must receive a passport from him; and, therefore, certainly, that which cannot escape his providence, cannot escape his knowledge. He accompanies us in solitariness. He is day about us at midnight. He sees our souls, more clearly than we can see one another's faces: and he hears the voice of our thoughts, more distinctly, than we can hear the sound of one another's words.

And where then will ungodly sinners appear, when Omniscience itself shall depose against them? When an all-knowing God shall rise up to accuse them? Now, indeed, God forbears them so long, till their impunity votes against his knowledge; and persuades them, that he sees them not, nor takes any notice of what they do. This is, usually, all the thanks they return his patience; that, because he winks at them, therefore they conclude him blind. But what saith God concerning these men, Ps. l. 21? "These things hast thou done, and I kept silence: thou thoughtest that I was altogether such an one as thyself:" here man passeth judgment on God. But, when God passeth judgment on man, he saith, "but I will reprove thee, and set them in order before thine eyes:" and this God doth, to some, in the judgment day of conviction; but, to all, in the judgment day of condemnation. He sets their sins in order before their faces.

This expression denotes two things.

First. How clear God's knowledge of our sins is in itself: that he will set the vast and confused heap of them in order, at that day. He will marshal them in the same rank and order, in which they were committed. The time, the place, the persons concerned, the occasions, the temptations, the aggravations, and all the circumstances of our sins, lie all a-row in his knowledge; and every sin shall then be as distinctly and particularly discovered by him, as ever it was committed by us.

Secondly. It denotes, how convincing this knowledge will be unto sinners. He will set their sins before their face: that is, he will so particularly represent unto them whatsoever they have done, and in what manner, that they shall, as it were, plainly see

every sin before their eyes, and be forced to acknowledge them for their own sins.

This knowledge of God, which shall give in evidence at the great tribunal, carries in it two things, which may justly make it very terrible unto sinners.

1. In that it is the knowledge *of the judge*.

What can be more dreadful to the prisoner at the bar, than for the judge himself to accuse him? He may cavil against the testimonies of other witnesses; but what plea can we have, when the judge shall pronounce him guilty, upon his own knowledge? This is the very case of sinners: many witnesses shall be produced against them, at the last day, who shall bring in great accusations and strong evidences: but none of these shall so daunt and damp them, as when God the judge shall, from his throne attest, that, upon his own knowledge, all is truth. They can expect nothing, but the sentence of the judge, to pronounce them damned; who have thus the knowledge of the judge, to pronounce them guilty.

2. It is the knowledge and testimony *of Him, who is truth itself*; and, therefore, cannot be contradicted or denied.

And what can save them, if truth itself shall testify against them? Unless that God, who is true in giving witness, should be unjust in giving sentence, which is impossible. It is impossible, likewise, that those, whom his knowledge doth accuse, his justice should acquit. Think then, oh sinner! what will become of thee, when thy sins shall be testified to thy face; not by any false or forged witness, but by the truth of God, to whom it is impossible either to lie or err: when his truth shall aver unto his justice, that thou art guilty, and both truth and justice consent together to thy condemnation. In 2 Kings v. 25, Gehazi returns from cheating Naaman, and stands very demurely before his master: "Whence comest thou, Gehazi? Thy servant went no whither:" No! saith the prophet: "Went not my heart with thee?" So, when men shall stand before the great God, he will call to them by name; "Sinner, what didst thou, such a day and hour of thy life?" It will be then in vain, to make any lame excuses; in vain to say, thy servant did nothing. "No! was not mine eye upon thee? Was not my heart with thee, to observe thy actions? Didst thou not, at such a time, wrong thy brother, by base fraud and injustice? At such a time abuse thyself by riot and intemperance? At such a time, blaspheme me, by hellish oaths and curses?" Men may, perhaps, think me somewhat coarse and blunt with them, to tell them of such sins as these are: but I

beseech them to consider, how they will answer God, when he shall reckon up against them these and other like sins; and accuse them of them upon his own knowledge. Here, men stand upon their own reputation: tell a sot, though he reels again, that he is drunk; or a thief, that he steals; or a liar, that he lies; and straight, in a rage, they will bid you prove it. But, when God shall, at the last day, accuse them of these sins, it will be found proof sufficient, that he, who is truth itself, shall depose it against them. That is, therefore, the first witness, God's knowledge.

ii. MEN'S CONSCIENCES also shall, in that day, bring in accusations against them.

And, indeed, conscience is not one witness, but a thousand: a whole cloud of witnesses; and such witnesses, as will speak truth too. Now, possibly, men's consciences may be seared so, as not to speak at all; or bribed so, as to speak nothing but flatteries, with Ahab's prophets, "Go, and prosper." But, those sins, which they seem to take no notice of, when committed, they will fearfully exaggerate, when accounted for. Though, here, conscience seems to be like the unjust steward, and sets down fifty for a hundred, and small sins for great; yet, at that day, it will mend its accounts, and give them up faithfully and impartially. Some sinners are, even in this life, self-condemned: conscience hath set upon them, and doomed them already. But all shall be so in the next: the process of God's justice shall be so clear, that men shall bring in evidence against themselves; and God shall need no other course to condemn them, but out of their own mouths: when God shall read over the catalogue of every man's sins against him, they shall all be found subscribed and attested by every man's conscience: and this, certainly, will be accepted as a competent witness, as having been always with the sinner, a register in his own breast, and having noted down every action of his life. Indeed, some men live as if they had no conscience at all: they do that, almost every day, which might set all the furies of hell about them; and, yet, they feel no terrors, no stings, nor scorpions. Well, their conscience is not dead, but sleepeth: it is in a deep sleep; but the sound of the last trumpet will certainly awaken it. And, oh! how dreadful will it be, when they shall first of all hear an unknown voice, which they never heard before, accuse them aloud; and, from within them, out of their own bowels, call for wrath and condemnation upon them? How sad will it be, for conscience to give its first shriek and outcry at the great bar; and

never to accuse them, before it comes there forever to condemn them! It is not so much to be heeded, what a partial conscience saith now unto you; as what it will say at this great day: now, it may be like a bell while raising; it speaks only on one side, and sounds nothing but peace, peace: but, then, this peaceable conscience will grow suddenly enraged; and the first ill word, which you may hear, will be the calling for wrath and vengeance upon you.

iii. As God and conscience, so THE DEVIL also will come in, to witness against sinners, and condemn them.

There are, in witnesses, many times, two qualities: the one, is a spleen and grudge against the offender; and this makes them willing: the other, is a personal knowledge of the offense; and this makes them able, to give in witness against them. In both these, the devil abounds: he hath a most rancorous malice against all mankind; and industriously seeks how he may, by any means, compass their destruction: and he hath a personal knowledge of their sins too; and therefore will, doubtless, come in to accuse them. You see how ready he was to calumniate Job, though he most impudently contradict God, to do it: how much more ready will he be, to accuse profane sinners, when his testimony against them shall agree with God's! Though, now, he shows them a fair and flattering face, when he tempts; yet, then, he will appear in all his hideousness and horror, when he shall drag them to the great bar, and there accuse them: "Lord, here is a wretch, guilty of such and such crimes, that deserve thy damnation."—"How knowest thou, Satan?"—"How know I? He did it upon my persuasions: I tempted him to it: I presented objects: I suited him with opportunities: I excited his inward lusts to embrace them: it was at such a time, in such a place, with such and such circumstances." Believe it, this is the only time, wherein the devil will tell them the truth. Now, he hides all, under false and flattering appearances: he shows the sinner nothing but the pleasure, or the profit, or the credit of the sin to which he tempts him: but, then, he will throw off this mask, and appear to him, as he is, plain devil. Men are often afraid, lest they should meet the devil in some terrible shape; lest he should make himself visible unto them: but little do they think, that he is always with them, and at their right hand: he goes along with them wherever they go; observes whatever they do; gathers matter for temptation, out of every thing they converse with. And all this pains he takes, only

that he might satisfy his malice in accusing them, and bringing witness against them, at the last day; and therefore, certainly, he will then urge it home with the greatest spite and aggravation that can be.

iv. OTHER MEN also shall then bring in witness against them.

And what a world will there appear!

i. *All those, with whom they have sinned: their brethren in iniquity.*

These shall then, with direful exclamations, accuse one another of all the wickednesses, which they have done in partnership together. Did the drunkard or the riotous person believe, that those, whom he now calls his good companions, shall hereafter be his bitter accusers; that, in this great day of judgment, they shall, with mutual curses and execrations, call for wrath and vengeance one upon another; certainly, this would damp their mirth, break their wicked crew, and strike their excessive cups out of their trembling hands. Here, sinners shall accuse one another: the one, for enticing; the other, for consenting. They shall witness each other's guilt; and, with a hellish malice, rejoice in one another's damnation. Go now, with such a thought upon thee, and hug thy sinful companion, if thou canst.

2. *All those, against whom they have sinned,* shall, at this day, appear to witness against them; whether injuries were done against their spiritual or temporal interests.

Thou, who, by thy evil example, hast encouraged others to sin, shall, at this day, have them all come in to witness against thee; and exclaim, with fearful outcries, "Lord! I had not been in this estate of wrath and damnation, had it not been for this man's example." Thou, who art careless and remiss, in instructing, in exhorting, in reproving those, who belong to thy charge, shalt have them all come in against thee: "Lord! we had not perished, had this man been careful to perform his duty to us: and, therefore, let our blood lie heavy upon his soul forever!" And, then, for temporal injuries many are here wronged, who cannot right themselves against their powerful oppressors: but, at this day, the meanest shall have audience, and right done them against the greatest; and the oppressors themselves shall be oppressed, and sunk down to hell, by the accusations and witness of those, whom they have here wronged.

3. *Those, who have reproved and exhorted sinners in vain,* shall, at this day, witness against them and accuse them.

Every word of instruction or admonition, that hath been given

you, shall then be witnessed to your faces, and your sin and condemnation aggravated by your slighting them.

These four sorts of witnesses shall then appear against you to accuse you: God, and your own consciences; the devil, and other men. Their witness will be found true, and agreeing together. These will prove you guilty.

And what will you be able to plead, why sentence should not proceed against you? Truly, there is but one way, how, though you are accused by so many witnesses, you may yet escape condemnation; and that is, first of all, to accuse yourselves in an humble and penitent acknowledgment unto God. Say as much against yourselves now, as the devil or your own consciences can be able to say against you at the last day. This will invalidate their accusations; when all, that they can bring against you, you have confessed unto God long before. And you have that promise, too, for your assurance: he, that judgeth himself, shall not be judged: 1 Cor. xi. 31. And so, he, that with true godly sorrow accuseth himself for his sins, though he shall be accused also at the great bar; yet, all those accusations shall not condemn him.

IX. In the next place, let us consider what PLEAS and DEFENCES men will then make for themselves; and the INVALIDITY of them.

Indeed, in strict propriety of speech, I think there shall be no such thing as defending or proving, as we use to phrase it. It will be with sinners, as it was with him, who was found at the wedding-supper without the wedding-garment: they shall be all stricken speechless; and, like guilty malefactors, hang down their heads under that heavy doom, which shall then pass upon them, without once daring to lift them up, in alleging any thing in their own defense or excuse. Reprove men now, and their constant custom is, either to deny, or extenuate, their faults. This lessening of sin is of as great antiquity, as the committing of it: no sooner did Adam sin, but he seeks out for fig-leaves, to cover his spiritual, as well as his corporeal nakedness; and lays the blame upon his wife; and she, again, upon the serpent: so it is still in this world: no man will father his own guilt: the vilest sinners stand peremptorily upon their own justification; and, as dogs, so they, with their own tongues, strive to lick off that dirt which sticks upon them. But, in this great day, every man's mouth shall be stopped. And there are two things, which will then silence all

the wicked of the world, that they shall have nothing to produce on their own behalf: and they are, *consciousness of guilt, and despair of mercy*. The former will show them, how untrue; the latter, how fruitless, all the excuses, which they can then make, will prove: should sinners once open their mouths in their own defense, their very consciences would rise up in their throats, and choke them: and, therefore, we have it, Rom. iii. 19, "That every mouth may be stopped, and all the world may be guilty before God." Or, should conscience give way, yet despair never makes apologies: and the certainty of their condemnation, which the most of them shall then know, by having before felt it; and the rest, as self-condemned men use to do, by prejudging it; this despairing certainty, I say, will rather move them to curse and blaspheme their judge, than to plead for or excuse themselves. Thus, if we speak properly, guilt and despair will tongue-tie every ungodly sinner at the great tribunal.

And, yet, the Scripture, where it gives us the most exact and particular description of this day of judgment, brings in wicked men defending themselves from the accusations laid in against them. So, Matt. xxv. 44, where they are accused for not relieving Christ, when hungry, and thirsty, and naked, and imprisoned; to this charge they return a very pert and quick answer, "When saw we thee an hungered, or athirst, or a stranger, or naked, or sick, or in prison?" So, Matt. vii. 22: "Many will say to me in that day, Lord, Lord, have we not prophesied in thy name? and in thy name cast out devils? and in thy name done many wonderful works?" It seems, therefore, that really, there shall be many pleas made by wicked men, to keep the sentence of the judgment from passing upon them. But the answer is easy. For these places are not to be understood literally; as if, indeed, they should put Christ upon proving his accusations, or should bring in any allegations for themselves. No, conscience and despair will, as I said, strike them all dumb. But the Scripture thus expresseth it, for these three reasons.

i. That, hereby, it might PARALLEL AND ACCOMMODATE THE JUDGMENT OF THE GREAT DAY, TO HUMAN COURTS OF JUDICATURE HERE BELOW.

Human judges are bound to hear what both parties can say; as all the defendant, as the plaintiff: otherwise, they must needs be unjust, in giving sentence without due information; although, perhaps, they may decree what is just. But, at this bar, there needs

no canvassing of the question to inform the judge. Yet, because this is the usual course in courts of justice here below; therefore, the Scripture, speaking of the great and last judgment, in conformity to these, mentions also the pleas that wicked men shall make for themselves; though, in strictness of speech, every mouth shall then be stopped, and every tongue cramped, but what shall be employed in judging and condemning themselves.

ii. Wicked men's pleas are mentioned in Scripture, that, hereby, MIGHT BE SET FORTH THE EXACT EQUITY AND CLEARNESS OF THAT GREAT TRIAL.

When we say, that men shall plead for themselves, the meaning only is, that God will be so just, that, in passing sentence upon them, he will consider, as well what may make for them, as what may make against them: their sentence shall be weighed out to them, as well according to the alleviating, as the aggravating circumstances of their sins: and it shall be as just and righteous, as if they had been permitted to plead all that possibly they could, on their own behalf. Thus, there are divers things spoken of this judgment, not as if they were really and properly to be transacted; but only to set forth the equity of God's proceedings therein. Rev. xx. 12, we have mention made, of the opening of the books, out of which men shall be judged. Now, it were very gross, hence to imagine, that there shall be any material books, out of which either God or his officers should read the indictment against sinners: but these books, here spoken of, are God's remembrance and men's own consciences, which shall then as punctually represent their works unto them, as if every circumstance had been carefully written down in a book. So, you have heard how many witnesses shall come in against sinners, and accuse them: neither is this to be understood literally; as if, indeed, all these should make a real appearance: only it denotes, that the trial of sinners shall be as just and legal, as if so many witnesses were sworn and examined against them. So, here, when we say, that wicked men shall bring in excuses for themselves at the day of judgment; or, when the Scripture brings them in, pleading, "Lord, when saw we thee an hungered, or thirsty, or naked? Lord, Lord, we have prophesied in thy name," &c., this doth not necessitate us to believe, that it shall be properly and literally thus fulfilled; but only intimates, that the judgment shall be as fairly and equally managed, as if every man were permitted to speak whatsoever he could produce for himself.

iii. The Scripture mentions their pleas, that, hereby, it MIGHT PRESCRIBE AGAINST AND CUT OFF MEN'S VAIN AND PRESUMPTUOUS HOPES.

And so it speaks rather by way of supposition, than affirmation. Almost every man hopes he shall be able to plead *that*, at the last day, which may be available to procure him mercy: now, suppose men were allowed to speak for themselves, and to produce in judgment what they now trust will stand them instead; alas! how much in vain would all be, that they can allege! Those, who have enjoyed Church privileges, and have eaten and drunk in Christ's presence; those, who have received spiritual gifts, and have prophesied and wrought miracles in his name: these rely upon this; and think this is enough to save them, in that great day; but, suppose they should plead all this, yet will the judge say, "Depart from me, ye workers of iniquity." So that the mentioning of wicked men's pleas and excuses doth but show, that what they trust to, and hope will bear them out in the day of judgment, will then be of no avail; but, notwithstanding all, sentence must pass upon them as "workers of iniquity."

And, in this sense, I shall now speak of it; and shall show you, that the pleas and excuses, with which wicked men do now relieve themselves, will then be found vain, and of no effect.

1. Many think that their *ignorance* will be a good excuse for them, at the day of judgment.

What is more common, in the mouths of brutish and sottish people? God will not require more than he hath given: it is not expected from them, to do as others, who are more learned and knowing; and, though they have not such good words, yet they have as good hearts as the best: and, they hope, their good meaning will bring them to heaven as soon as others, whose heads are better stuffed, and whose tongues are better tipped, than theirs. And so they think, that there is no safer, nor easier, nor shorter way to get to heaven, than in the dark, hoodwinked and blind-folded.

It is true, it is not necessary for every private Christian to busy and beat his head about the nice and curious questions of religion; which have always been disputed, and will never be decided, till our partial knowledge give place to perfect. We have sufficiently seen, what wild delusions and damnable errors men of weak intellect have run into, while they have employed themselves about the disputes, rather than the practice of Christianity: when men of shallow parts will boldly adventure to fathom deep controver-

sies, they plunge themselves into an abyss of mistakes and errors, and are in the ready way to drown themselves in perdition. And yet, withal, it were to be wished, that Christians did not look upon all that is disputed against by men of perverse minds, as uncertain to be known, and unnecessary to be practiced.

Some things, in the Christian religion, are fundamental and vital; the ignorance of which excludes from all possibility of salvation. And such are the doctrines of repentance from dead works; of faith in our Lord Jesus; of the common and daily duties of a godly life. He, who knows not, that sin is to be repented of, that Christ is to be believed in, that the duties of holiness and obedience are to be constantly performed, and good works to be maintained, cannot possibly be in any capacity of salvation. The knowledge of these things is necessary, not only *necessitate præcepti*, by the necessity of God's command, which requires them; for, so is every thing in Scripture necessary, either to be known or done: but *necessitate medii*, they are necessary, as means to the obtaining of an end, and without which it cannot possibly be obtained. No man can be saved, unless he repent and believe; and no man can repent and believe, if he be utterly ignorant what repentance, and faith, and God, and Christ are. Such ignorance, in whomsoever it is, is damnable. So, Ps. lxxix. 6, "Pour out thy wrath upon the heathen, that have not known thee." And the prophet Isaiah makes such ignorance to be so far from an excuse, that it is the very reason why God will not spare nor pity them: Isa. xxvii. 11, "It is a people of no understanding; therefore, he, that made them, will not have mercy on them; and he, that formed them, will show them no favor." And, yet, how many are there, who know not what repentance, or faith, or God, or the gospel, means! who know not Christ's person, nor his offices; his merits, nor their own misery; what he hath purchased for them, nor what he requires from them! and yet, if they know that there is a heaven, hope to go to it too! Believe it, such are in no more capacity for salvation, than the very heathen; nay, in a far worse condition, inasmuch as the heathen never could, but they might attain to the saving knowledge of a Saviour, were it not for their own wretched and willful slowness. Ignorance of fundamental truths and vital duties will be so far from an excuse, that it will be brought in as one killing part of their indictment; and, certainly, most forlorn and desperate must that man's case needs be, whose best excuse is of itself a damning sin.

Other things there are, in the Christian religion, that appertain

not to the vitals, but to the vigorous, flourishing, and beautiful state of holiness, both in the heart and life. And such are, a competent knowledge and insight into the more abstruse mysteries and remote duties of the gospel. There are many truths revealed in Scripture, and some duties commanded; the ignorance of which, we dare not but say, may be consistent with true grace. The disciples of Christ himself, before his ascension, knew not many things, which yet were of great concernment to be known, and of great influence upon practice.

But, do not presently conclude, that, certainly, your ignorance is of this kind: an ignorance of such things as are merely mysterious, and of no absolute necessity, either to be known or done, in order to salvation: and, therefore, though you fail in many things, yet that this will serve for your excuse, at the last day.

For this ignorance is twofold; either

Invincible; and that is, indeed, an excuse for sin: or else,

Willful and affected; and that is so far from being an excuse, that it is a dreadful aggravation of it.

An invincible ignorance is such, as is conjoined with an impossibility, in an ordinary manner, of right information; and it ariseth only from two things:

Absolute want of necessary instruction.

Want of natural capacity to receive it.

If you are deficient in either of these, then, indeed, ignorance might pass for a tolerable excuse for many faults, at the day of judgment. And, indeed, it doth not only excuse *à tanto*, as is commonly held; but *à toto*: for, where there can be no sufficient declaration of the law, it is all one as if there were no law; and, where there is no law, there is no transgression. And, therefore, as I said above, no sins shall be charged upon the heathen, but such as the law of nature and right reason doth condemn.

But, certainly, your ignorance cannot be invincible, nor pleaded by you as an excuse: for,

First. Have you not the means of knowledge plentifully dispensed amongst you?

When you have frequent instructions, Scriptures unfolded, truths inculcated, duties pressed and urged, it must be mere indolence, that can keep you ignorant. If you see not the light, it is because you love darkness: if you know not the things of God, it is because you say unto him, "Depart from us, for we desire not the knowledge of thy ways."

Secondly. Are you destitute of natural capacities of wit and

understanding, to apprehend the truths of God and the mysteries of salvation, when they are delivered to you?

Thou, who art as knowing for the world, as others; what is the reason thou art not as knowing for heaven? Dost thou not enjoy the same means; the same instructions, advice, and admonitions? And why, then, so ignorant in spiritual concerns, and yet so politic and wise in worldly affairs? Why! but because men willfully close their eyes, and stop their ears; lest they should see with their eyes, and hear with their ears, and understand with their hearts, and so spoil a good excuse against the day of judgment?

But, alas! this excuse will not hold good, at that day. If men will not see, when the light shines round about them; if they will not know, but refuse instruction, when the means of knowledge is dispensed to them; this blindness and ignorance is so far from lessening, that it will exceedingly heighten and increase, both their sin and their condemnation. Drunkenness is no excuse of a fault, but an aggravation; because, though the drunkard knows not what he doth, yet he willfully deprives himself of the use of his own reason: and so a sin, that is committed through willful and affected ignorance, is made two thereby. And, certainly, if that servant was to be beaten with many stripes, who knew his master's will, but did it not; with many more shall he be beaten, who knew not his master's will, but might have known it. And, therefore, think not to plead ignorance for your excuse. Believe it, pleaded it shall be, but not by you: but, by the devil and your own consciences, against you.

2. Many rely upon their *civil and reproachless lives*.

They neither debauch themselves, nor wrong others: and, if they were called before man's judgment-seat, nothing could be charged upon them; and therefore, certainly, they hope to escape at God's tribunal, which is not so severe and unmerciful as man's is. But, let them know, that this negative righteousness will nothing avail them, so long as it is baffled by their unbelief: for there is an immutable law, that fixeth an eternal doom upon every man: "He, that believeth.....shall be saved; but he, that believeth not, shall be damned:" Mark xvi. 16.

3. Many rely upon a *comparative righteousness*.

They glory, with the boasting Pharisee, that they are not extortioners, unjust, adulterers, as other men; and, therefore, they hope, that, as they have not lived the same lives, so they shall not partake of the same condemnation. But, alas! God will not judge thee, by comparing thee with other men, but with his law:

thou fallest far short of the holiness and perfection of that, even in those very actions, wherein thou dost far transcend other men: it may be, there is no comparison between thee and others; but then there is no comparison between thee and the law: thy very excellencies may, at this day, be judged deficiencies; and thyself, a surpasser of others, wilt be then judged as a transgressor against God. And, yet, if a comparative happiness will content thee, this, possibly, thou mayst have for thy comparative holiness: yea, but this is no relief, no comfort; for this comparative happiness thou mayst have in hell itself: those, who have been holy, in comparison with the wickedness of the lewd and debauched world, shall also be hereafter happy, in comparison with the intolerableness of their torments; and, yet, thou mayst be a miserable damned wretch for all this.

4. Others rely upon *their own righteousness, and the merit of their own good works.*

They doubt not, but if God would set their good against their bad, they should stand upright in judgment; and think, that, take one time with another, God hath been no loser by them: if, at one time, they have provoked him; at another, they have appeased him: if they have wronged him, by sins; they have again recompensed him, by duties. Foolish creatures! who think to discharge debts by duties; and satisfy God's justice with that, which they owe to his sovereignty: this is but robbing one of God's attributes, to pay another. Hadst thou never offended justice; yet all the good, which thou canst perform, is due to God's sovereignty, as he is thy Creator and highest Lord: justice requires not obedience, but punishment; nor will it be satisfied with any kind of punishment, but what is, like itself, infinite; and, therefore, though you should deal out all your estates in alms; though you should drop tears night and day; though you could make rivers by weeping, and raise storms by sighing, and pray till your tongues cleave to the roof of your mouths; though you should fast yourselves to ghosts, and macerate your bodies with the most rigid and sharp penances that ever blind devotionists practiced, and, after all, give them to be burned; yet all this could not be put into the balance against the least of your sins. For, whatsoever you can either do or suffer, is due or not due, is required by God or not required. If it be due, it cannot be satisfactory: the payment of one debt cannot cross out another. If it be not due, it cannot be acceptable: it is but will-worship: false and adulterate coin, (and much of this sort is among the

Papists,) that bears not the stamp of divine warranty upon it, and therefore will not be received, nor pass for payment. Not that I would drive you from performing duties: God forbid! but, from trusting in them. Let me ask you, to what purpose is it, that you keep up something of religion? To what purpose, that you frequent public ordinances? That you force your ears to hear that word, which yet prophesieth no good concerning you; and task your lips to say over those prayers, in which yet you find no relish? Is it not the secret thought of many men's hearts, that hereby they shall buy off guilt and escape condemnation? If this be your hope, let me tell you, it is no better than a spider's web; and, when the besom of destruction comes, it will sweep down such cobweb-hopes as these are, and such as settle in them, into perdition. For, those very duties and works, unto which many trust to save them, may, at this day, for the slight and hypocritical performance of them, be reckoned up against them as so many sins: so far from being expiations, that they may rather be their faults: there will be no setting the good against the bad; for the manner of performing that, which is good, turns it into filth and abomination in the sight of God; and all they do, is either sin in itself or sinful. And, therefore, to plead your own righteousness and your own good works, is but to plead that, the defects and hypocrisy of which will be brought in against you, to condemn you.

5. Many most presumptuously rely upon *the merciful and gracious disposition of God*: and found their hopes of safety, in that great day, only upon this presumption.

In spite of Scripture, and threatenings, and judgments, they will not believe, but that the world is only scared out of its wits, by representing God more terrible and severe than indeed he is. What though the law hath threatened death to transgressors, and the gospel to unbelievers; and they are both: yet they will think, that God hath still reserved in his hands a power to relax this rigorous sentence, and to dispense with and pardon whom he pleaseth; and they hope they shall be of that number. Strange sinners these! who are resolved upon it, that God shall show them mercy, though he himself hath protested the contrary: and will not be beaten from it, but that their souls are dearer to God, than his own truth. And, therefore as it were on purpose to blast such foolish hopes, where divine mercy is displayed in the greatest glory that ever it was, God brings in the severity of his justice to equal it: so, *Exod. xxxiv. 6, 7*: "The Lord God, merciful and gracious long-suffering, and abundant in goodness and truth, keeping mercy

for thousands, forgiving iniquity and transgression and sin:" now after all this triumph of mercy, to dash the hopes of wicked men, it is added, a God "that will by no means clear the guilty." Carnal reason might possibly think it a contradiction, that God should proclaim that he will pardon sin; and yet, by no means, acquit the guilty; for what else is pardon, but an acquittal of those who are guilty? But here is no contradiction: the guilty, whom God will pardon, are the penitent and believing sinners, here upon earth: the guilty, whom he will by no means pardon, are the finally impenitent; those, who shall be found under guilt, at the day of judgment. Though there shall stand millions of wretched creatures, wringing their hands, tearing their hair, rending heaven and earth with their outcries; enough, even to move those very rocks to compassion, which they shall then call upon to hide and cover them: yet this God, who is all compassion and love, and whom wicked men do preposterously fancy so merciful; yet this merciful God will only mock at their fears, and laugh at their cries, and send them all to hell with scorn. That Christ, who so far gratified the petition of the very devils, as to send them into the herd of swine, rather than back to hell, their place of torments; though all the wicked world should fall down at his feet, and beg him, by his death, his blood and passion, by all that he hath either done or suffered, to show them mercy, (powerful arguments, if now used, to prevail,) yet these powerful arguments shall not then incline him, either to pardon them, or, in the least, to mitigate their doom. No, this "is the accepted time:" this "is the day of salvation." As soon as this life is expired, the time of believing and repenting is expired too; and the time of mercy and pardon, with it. When Christ shall sit as judge, it will then be too late to cry, "Mercy! mercy!" Mercy hath been already tendered, and proudly rejected. Sinners! why was it not embraced while you lived upon the earth: while you were entreated and besought to accept it? It is now in vain to call, or cry, or strive: God hath sworn in his wrath, that not one of them shall enter into his rest.

6. Many ignorant persons think, that they will plead with God, *that they are his creatures, and the workmanship of his own hands.*

They will never believe, that the infinitely gracious God will damn, what himself hath made; and destroy the work, which his own hands hath framed. But,

(1) What think you? Have not the devils as good a plea as this?

Are not they God's creatures, and the work of his hands, as well

as you? Nay, are they not more costly and exquisite pieces of the creation, as being mighty spirits, than you, who are but vile dust? If God must, therefore, in justice save you, because you are his creatures, must he not save them too? Certainly, this plea gives sinners but poor hopes, which only proves, that, if they be saved, so must the very devils.

(2) Let the Scripture beat off men's hands, from grasping this reed.

Doth not God expressly say, Prov. xvi. 4, he "made all things for himself, and the wicked for the day of evil?" In vain is it to plead, "He made me, and therefore will save me." If thou remain wicked, God made thee for the day of wrath and destruction: so, Isa. xxvii. 11: "He, that made them, will not have mercy on them: and he, that formed them, will show them no favor."

(3) Wicked men are not so much to be accounted God's workmanship, as the devil's.

God doth not so much ascribe the workmanship of the man unto himself, as the workmanship of the new man. Are you sanctified and renewed? Then are you, indeed, God's workmanship: Eph. ii. 10: "We are his workmanship, created.....unto good works." But, while men continue in their sinful state, though God made them, yet they are the devil's workmanship: he is their father, and they his offspring. God's workmanship was made like God; but that image is defaced, and the perfect resemblance of the devil stamped upon the souls of wicked men. And, therefore, in destroying them, God doth not so much destroy his own image, as the brood of Satan. This is, therefore, no ground of hope, nor plea for mercy.

7. It will then be in vain, to plead *Church privileges and ordinances*, or *spiritual gifts and endowments*.

Christ hath told us, that many shall come to him with open mouth, in the last day, "Lord, Lord, have we not prophesied in thy name? and in thy name.....cast out devils? and in thy name done many wonderful works? We have eaten and drunk in thy presence, and thou hast taught in our streets. And must we be sentenced to the same hell, with those, who never heard thee preaching? With those, whom thou never heardest praying?" A specious plea! yet, if this be all, he will command them away into everlasting fire: "Go, ye cursed." The kingdom of heaven here upon earth, I mean the visible Church, for so the Scripture often calls it, admits many wicked men and hypocrites into communion with it: they enjoy the same ordinances, partake of the same

sacraments; but, at this day, will be made the great separation, when the members of the kingdom of heaven shall themselves be shut out of the kingdom of glory: so saith our Saviour, Matt. viii. 12: "The children of the kingdom shall be cast out into outer darkness."

8. Some may think to allege, for their excuse, that *they wanted time to prepare for eternity.*

Their employments in the world are such, that they have not leisure to think of their soul's welfare: providence hath set them in a most cumbersome calling; and the cares and business of this world flow in so fast upon them, that they drink up all their thoughts, and sequester all their time. As the Duke of Alva, being demanded whether he observed a comet that had lately appeared, "No," said he, "I have so much to do on earth, that I cannot spare time to mind heaven:" so it is with many: they are overwhelmed with worldly employments, and have no spare time to think of heaven; and therefore hope, that God will not expect so much from them, as from others who are better at leisure. But, it were happy for these men, if, as they pretend, they cannot spare time to be holy, so they could not spare time to die, and to be judged. It is true, men may make their trades and callings too unwieldy for them; and thereby become, not masters, but drudges to their own affairs: they have not time for natural and necessary refreshments; and what time, then, think you, for divine and heavenly duties? What time for prayer or meditation, when the world is still crowding in upon them? Those, who have little else to do, find it a hard task to work their hearts to a ready performance of these; and how much more they, who have always some pretense from their callings, to neglect them! However, it is the greatest folly in the world, and can be no excuse at the last day, to grasp so much of earth, as to let go their hold of heaven. Men should, therefore, so model and adjust their worldly employments, as to make daily room for religion. And, let them know, that, if these their employments be either such or so numerous, as are not consistent with a godly life; this is not a calling, but a temptation, and as such to be avoided. It will not be an excuse, but an aggravation, of men's doom at the last day, that they, who have lived forty or threescore years in the world, could yet find no time for heaven; as if the laying up of a vain and perishing estate here below were of more concern, than the laying up "treasures in heaven, and a good foundation against the time to come."

Thus we see how vain and frivolous those many excuses, that men may think to make at the day of judgment, will then prove. Let me hence only draw one practical inference, and so conclude. Since, then, no excuse will prevail, to keep off the dreadful sentence of judgment, oh! then! let no excuse prevail, to keep us from a holy life. Let no excuse keep us from coming to Christ, since no excuse can help us when we come before Christ. When our Saviour invited his guests, they all made excuses: one had bought a farm, and another oxen, and they could not come. Poor excuses! but yet any thing is sufficient to reject Christ's invitation. But, though men make excuses when Christ invites them, no excuses shall serve the turn when he summons them. The ministers of the gospel, when they knock at men's hearts and bid them come to Christ, are turned off with very slight answers: but, pray bethink yourselves, what excuse, what answer you will make, when an angel shall come into the grave to you, and knock at your coffins, and bid you arise, and come to judgment. It were well for many, if they could then excuse themselves from appearing; or else, at their appearing, excuse themselves from their guilt and condemnation. But no excuse will then be taken. I beseech you, consider, that, in that day, and that day is coming, nothing will avail you but faith and obedience: and, as you would plead it then, so be persuaded to practice it now.

x. The tenth and last general proposition to be treated, in handling this subject, is, the PRONOUNCING and EXECUTING OF THE SENTENCE, which shall be the last decision of our eternal state.

And that is twofold: either of absolution, or of condemnation: either, "Come, ye blessed:" or "Go, ye cursed." These two sentences shall proceed and the execution of them be proportioned, according to the difference of men's lives and works. All "shall come forth," saith our Saviour: "they, that have done good, unto the resurrection of life; and they, that have done evil, unto the resurrection of damnation:" John v. 29. And this, the text expresseth to be a receiving according to what we have done in the body; "whether it be good or bad." So, Rev. xx. 12: "The dead were judged....according to their works."

For the more distinct prosecution of this particular, there are two terms in the text, which require a more exact consideration: the one, is that proportioning term, *according*: the other, is that of *receiving*; which, being here peculiarly spoken of the day of

judgment, must necessarily imply the receiving, either of a blessed reward, or of a deserved punishment.

If we consider the former term, *according to that he hath done*, this may admit of a threefold distinction.

First distinction. Men shall be judged according to their works: either *quoad speciem operum*; or, else, *quoad diversum gradum in eâdem specie*: either according to the different *kind* of their works; or else, according to the different *degrees* of them, in the same kind.

Second distinction. According to our works, may denote, that the recompense of our works, shall be proportioned, either according to their own *merit*; or, else, according to God's *covenant and agreement* with us.

Third distinction. And, if we consider the reward and punishment, which we shall receive according to our works; this also is either partial and incomplete; or, else, perfect, and entire.

Out of these distinctions thus premised, I intend to form my following discourse.

i. Therefore, the last definitive sentence shall pass upon all ACCORDING TO THEIR WORKS; that is, either ACCORDING TO THE KINDS, or THE DECREES of them.

1. Though, in a natural respect, there be various and numberless *kinds* of works: yet in morality, there are but two especially; and they are, good and bad.

Concerning indifferent actions, the text takes no cognizance; nor shall I, at present, meddle with them: for, indeed, there shall no such actions be found at the day of judgment; but those, which are different in themselves, are determined, and made good or bad, by their circumstances; and, as such, shall be accounted for at the last day.

Now, in these two great kinds, of good and bad, which divide between them whatsoever is done in the world, there are several degrees and advances. They are not all like Jeremiah's figs; the good, incomparably good; and the evil, excessively evil: but some good actions are better, and some bad are worse, than others. And this difference proceeds; in godly men, from the mixture of corruption with grace, whereby they cannot do the good they would; and, in ungodly men, from conscience or some more external restraint, whereby they dare not do the evil they would.

Now, that a different sentence shall proceed upon men at the last, according to the different kinds of their works; that those, who have done good, shall receive good, and those, who have done evil, shall accordingly receive evil, is so clear, that he must be a very atheist, and destroy the foundation, not only of the Christian, but of all religion (for all religion is built upon this belief), who shall go about to deny it. I need not quote Scripture, though it be in nothing more abounding than in this. The very first springings of natural light, and the unpremeditated resolves of reason, dictate this to be an unquestioned truth. For, from whence proceed those pale fears and grim thoughts, those heart-smitings and stinging regrets, which sometimes pierce and rack the souls even of the most wicked wretches, but from a sad apprehension, that the great God will recompense unto them evil for evil? Into which apprehension they are not disputed, by any far-fetched arguments and long consequences; but it strongly masters their understandings and consciences, by its own downright and native evidence.

2. Leaving them, therefore, to the horror of that reflection, let us, in the second place, consider the proportioning of the last sentence, "*according to the several degrees of good and evil that shall be found in men's works.*" Herein, something is probable, and something demonstratively certain.

(1) It may very piously and profitably, and with great probability, be believed, that there shall be a distribution of different degrees of glory, according to the different exercise of grace and holiness in this life.

Learned men are at some variance, in this particular. The most affirm it: and others do not indeed so much deny it, as they do, that there is any thing in Scripture upon which we may fix a firm and sure persuasion, that it shall be so; and among these, are Peter Martyr, and Spanhemius, and Cameron. Those, who are for the affirmative, allege, Matt. v. 19, He that breaks the least commandment, shall be the least in the kingdom of God. To this it is answered by others, that the kingdom of heaven here, may be well taken for the kingdom of grace in the Church on earth; and so to be *least* in it, infers no inferiority in glory: or, if it be taken for the kingdom of glory; yet, that to be the *least* in it, implies here a total exclusion from it. That parable, Matt. xxv., of the different rewards according to the different improvements of the talents, is produced to favor a difference in degrees of glory: those of the contrary persuasion say, that, if parables be in this case argumentative, they may well oppose that other parable, Matt. xx.,

against degrees of glory, where each of the laborers received a like reward, though for different labor: each man had his penny; as well he, who came in at the eleventh hour, as they, who had borne the heat and burden of the day. Again, it is pleaded, from 1 Cor. xv. 41, 42, where the Apostle saith, that as "one star differeth from another star in glory, so also is the resurrection of the dead;" that, therefore, there are degrees of glory: but to this it is truly replied, that the Apostle speaks not there concerning the difference between one glorified body and another; but of the difference that is in one and the same body, between its state of corruption before, and incorruption after, the resurrection: As "one star differeth from another star in glory," so doth the body differ when it is raised, from what it was, when it was sown. It was sown a corruptible body, it is raised incorruptible, &c. Many such arguments are alleged, and many such answers are shaped to them. Which of these two is the very truth, I shall not presume positively to determine. Only, to me, it seems more according to the plain and obvious sense of the Scriptures, that there shall be different degrees of glory, as a correspondent reward unto men's different works of grace: not only that our good works shall receive a good recompense; but that, according to the exalted measure of goodness that is in them, such, likewise, shall be our exaltation in the heavenly kingdom; where, possibly, there shall be no parity, as there is no confusion. And, possibly, this may be intimated, 1 Cor. iii. 8, where the Apostle tells us, that "every man shall receive his own reward, according to his own labor."

But, howsoever, whether there shall be such a difference or not, we may make a twofold good use of it.

[1] If there shall be different degrees of glory, how should this excite us to strive after an eminence in holiness!

Certainly, it is a commendable and a worthy ambition, to covet the highest place in heaven; to desire to sit next to cherubim and seraphim; nay, if it were possible, to get the same place in heaven, which St. John, the beloved disciple, held here on earth, to lean in the very bosom of Christ himself. If increase of grace will proportionably increase glory, what Christian will manage so badly as not to put that grace to use, that shall at last bring him in so great interest and advantage? To be continually in the exercise of holiness, is to be continually adorning our own crown, and setting new gems into it: it is but to irradiate our diadem of stars, with a luster that shall outshine the sun in its brightness; and to

make that glory ponderous and weighty, the least measures of which are in themselves precious and inestimable.

[2] If there shall be no different degrees of glory, but all shall be of the same pitch and stature; think then, oh Christian! what infinite comfort it will be, that, though now thy graces are weak, thy fears perplexing, thy corruptions restless, thy temptations violent and impetuous; though now thou seest thyself excelled by many, whom thou admirest, and fain wouldst imitate: yet, at this day, the same sentence shall absolve thee, the same heaven receive thee, the same glory crown thee, as shall absolve, receive, and crown the holy patriarchs, prophets, and apostles, the most eminent and singular saints, forever. So that, whether you are persuaded, that there shall be different degrees of glory in heaven or not; yet it yields matter of motive, or of comfort.

But, to leave this,

(2) It is certain, that the last sentence and the execution of it shall be proportioned, according to the different degrees of evil, of which wicked men shall be guilty.

The Scripture is express for this; Luke xii. 47, 48: He, which knew his Lord's will, and did it not, "shall be beaten with many stripes: but he, that knew it not," that is, if his ignorance of it be invincible, "shall be beaten with few stripes:" so, Matt. xi. 22, 24: "It shall be more tolerable" for Tyre and Sidon, for Sodom and Gomorrah, in the day of judgment, than for Chorazin and Bethsaida. Every vessel of wrath shall, indeed, be brimful; but some vessels shall contain much more wrath than others: God shall, on purpose, widen and enlarge their capacities, that he may pour into them much more of his fury and indignation, who have deserved more at his hands. Indeed, the wrath, nay the least frown of Almighty God, is able to sink the stoutest of his creatures into nothing. But, herein, is the dreadful severity of God seen, that the more power he will put forth in punishing them, the more power he will put forth in supporting them; and will, as it were, hold them up in one hand, while he scourgeth them with the other.

And, if there shall be such a difference of punishments in hell, according to the difference of crimes here on earth, oh then! of what desperate folly and madness are most wicked men guilty, who so go on, adding iniquity to iniquity, as if they were resolved, a single damnation should not content them! Is it, that they despair of mercy, and think that it is but in vain for them to scruple sinning, who are sure of condemnation? Why, though

they had ground for such a despair, which no man hath, who will speedily repent and be converted; though they had heard God swear aloud, in his wrath, that they, of all men living, should never enter into his rest: yet, it is a degree beyond all madness, for men therefore to aggravate their damnation, because they cannot escape it. Believe it, the least degree of God's everlasting wrath is an intolerable hell: and what do you else, by deserving additional degrees by your repeated sins, but heap up many hells for your torments; and heat the infernal furnace, into which you must be cast, sevenfold hotter than else it would be? There is not the smallest part of torment which the damned now suffer, but, were they for a while reprieved and let out of hell, they would do more to escape, than the most holy and laborious Christians do to obtain all heaven itself. All this I speak upon supposition: for, assurance of salvation there may be, but of damnation there cannot be, in this life: and, yet, were it supposed that men could be assured that their souls were cut out on purpose to make fire-brands for hell; yet, hereupon, desperately to harden themselves in sin, what were it else, but to set these brands burning at both ends? What were it else, but, because they must be prisoners, to strive what they can do to deserve the dungeon?

Thus, then, we have seen how men must be judged according to their works: both as to the kinds of them, which are good or evil; receiving the good of salvation according to the good of obedience, and the evil of damnation according to the evil of sin: and, likewise, according to the degrees of their works, in each kind: and I have showed it to be probable, that, of those, whose works have been more holy, the glory shall be more excellent; and to be certain, that of those, whose works have been more sinful, the punishment shall, accordingly, be more intolerable.

ii. The second distinction premised was this: that, to be judged according to our works, may denote, that the recompense of our works shall be made, either AS THEY ARE CONSIDERED IN THEMSELVES AND THEIR OWN INTRINSIC WORTH AND MERIT; or, else, AS THEY ARE CONSIDERED IN GOD'S COVENANT AND AGREEMENT MADE WITH US; which covenant promiseth a blessed reward to our good works, and threateneth a severe punishment to our evil works.

And, here, I shall briefly lay down these two positions.

1. *Wicked men shall, in this great day, be judged according to the proper demerits of their own works.*

And what that is, the Apostle informs us, Rom. vi. 23: "The wages of sin is death." And, certainly, God will not be unjust, in withholding deserved wages from any of the workers of iniquity: but, because they have not as yet received any thing in proportion according to their deserts, therefore divine justice reserves it for them in hell. The heaviest punishments which they can endure upon earth, be they outward torments or inward horrors, are but small drops and foretastes of that full cup of wrath and trembling, that God will put into their hands, and of which he will force them to drink forever. And, therefore, look what Christ suffered for believers, what wrath, fears, and agonies met upon him, as the desert of the sins of those in whose place he stood; the same shall all wicked and ungodly men bear in their own persons: yea, and possibly much more, inasmuch as there is no dignity in their persons to take off from the degrees of their punishments, as there was in him: it was more satisfactory to justice, for a Divine person, who was God as well as man, to suffer less, than it can be for such contemptible creatures as men are, to suffer more: and, therefore, if ever any wicked man was affected with a deep sense of what Christ underwent, let him know, that those sufferings do but represent, as in a map, how great and insupportable his shall be, when God shall come to render unto him according to his doings. And, yet, let me add this too, that still there is more ill-desert in their sins, than the utmost extremity of punishment can reach: sin is an infinite evil; and doth, in itself, merit every way infinite punishment, infinite in intention as well as extension, in degree as well as duration: yea, the least sin, in itself, deserves as much or more wrath, than that with which the greatest is punished; so that the very damned themselves may, with truth, say, that they are punished less than their iniquities deserve. It is not possible for a finite creature to bear the full strokes of an infinite justice: and, therefore, God limits his justice within the compass of their limited natures; and brings it to a stint infinitely below their deserts, and yet infinitely above their patience to endure. Oh, how much cursed malignity there is in sin! those sins, with which rash and foolish man plays and dallies; that lay him under as much wrath as can be heaped upon him, and deserve infinitely more!

2. *Believers shall be judged according to their works, not considered in their own desert, but as considered in God's gracious covenant and agreement made with them.*

In strict propriety of speech, merit denotes the dueness of the

reward to our actions, antecedently to any compact, or promise made to reward them. Now, if we consider the holiest and best works of the holiest and best Christians, they are only acceptable and rewardable with eternal life, as they are under God's gracious promise in Christ; and therefore cannot be, in themselves, meritorious: and, if we consider them as abstracted from this promise, they are so far from being rewardable with life, that they are punishable, for the defects of them, with eternal death. God, indeed, is become a debtor to our faith and obedience; but St. Augustin well resolves us how: *Deus debitorem se fecit, non aliquid accipiendo, sed liberaliter promittendo*: "God hath made himself a debtor, not by receiving any thing from us, but by promising liberally to us:" and, so, he is a debtor rather to his own word, than to our works. This, therefore, is the unspeakable happiness of true believers: their weak and imperfect works, if done in faith and sincerity, shall, through Christ's merits and God's promise, be as fully rewarded, as if they were perfect and unspotted obedience.

iii. We must DISTINGUISH IN REGARD TO THE REWARD AND PUNISHMENT, which men shall receive according to their works: for that is either PARTIAL and INCOMPLETE; or, else, PERFECT and ENTIRE: the one is to be received at every man's particular, the other at the last and universal judgment: according as we ourselves are, either partial or complete, so will be our recompense.

1. Before the resurrection and general judgment, only one part of man is capable either of glory or torment; and this is his soul. That, therefore, I call a *partial reward*, that *crowns but a part of man*; and that a *partial punishment*, which is *inflicted but on a part*, viz., the separate soul. The bodies, even of those, whose souls shall be as far distant as heaven and hell, must lie down and sleep together in the same common bed of earth: the saints, whose souls now shine in heaven as the sun in the firmament, if we ransack their graves, we shall not find their dust more glittering than others; nor are the carcasses of those sinners, whose souls now burn as firebrands in hell, more black and sooty. The bodies, therefore, of men, shall not receive according to what hath been done in them, until the consummation of all things. Only some few exceptions the Scripture hath noted; as Enoch, Elias, and (as St. Augustin in one of his Epistles supposeth) those saints who were raised at Christ's death, who have already received their entire happiness.

Indeed, as when Christ lay in the grave, there was still the con-

tinuance of the hypostatic union between his dead body and his everliving Godhead; so is there a continuance of the mystical union between the dead bodies, yea between every scattered and loose particle of dust of the saints, and the glorious person of Jesus Christ. Now this, though it be an exceeding great honor, yet we cannot so much reckon any part of the reward, as an assurance of the whole: for, because the bodies of the saints, while separated from their souls, are yet united by an invisible and ineffable band to their Saviour; therefore, do they now rest in hope, and shall hereafter arise in glory: "Because I live, ye shall live also:" John xiv. 19. "And this is the Father's will....that of all which he hath given me I should lose nothing, but should raise it up again at the last day:" John vi. 39. Christ's miraculous resurrection took place within three days after his death; but his mystical resurrection shall not be until the end of the world: when the saints of all ages shall together rise out of their graves, then rises Christ's mystical body; and to this very end shall it rise, that the saints, being themselves complete and entire, may then receive a complete and entire happiness; that, as they have on earth glorified God both in body and soul, so in heaven both body and soul may be glorified with God. It is worth observing, how gradually God leads his people into the possession of glory; as if he would accustom them to bear such an exceeding and eternal weight, as the Apostle calls it, by lifting smaller parcels of it beforehand: and, therefore, in this life, they only receive "the earnest of their inheritance," which are the graces and comforts of the Spirit: Eph. i. 13, 14: at death, they receive vast incomes of glory, as much as their souls alone can contain: yet this is but only part of payment, upon which they live splendidly, until the resurrection of their bodies and the process of the general judgment; and, then, as the body shall again receive its soul, so both soul and body shall together receive their full reward; the uttermost farthing of all that Christ hath purchased, the gospel promised, or themselves expected. So is it, also, with the wicked men; sin and the terrors of a guilty conscience are the earnest of hell, in this life: the torments of the separate soul are part of payment; but, still, justice is behindhand with them, till the resurrection of their bodies; and then shall they receive the full measures of wrath, pressed down and running over. And, indeed, it is but meet, that these bodies should be consorts with the soul in receiving, as they have been in doing, good or evil.

2. Now, what this *consummate reward and punishment* shall be, is altogether inconceivable.

(1) The *complete reward* which is reserved for believers, is inconceivably glorious.

It is that, which neither eye has seen, nor ear heard; neither hath it, nor can it, enter into the heart of man to conceive, what God hath prepared for those that love him; scarce thoroughly apprehended by the blessed themselves; and, therefore, for us, who are yet at distance, to attempt a description, were but to sully and diminish it. And, therefore, as God, who is infinite and incomprehensible, is better known to us by negatives than affirmatives, by what he is not than by what he is: so also is heaven: you may best conceive it, when we tell you, there shall be nothing to fright, nothing to afflict, nothing to grieve, nothing to lessen the highest, fullest, sweetest delight and satisfaction, that the vast and capacious soul of man is able, either to receive or to imagine; there, we shall be freed from all the cares and sorrows, the pains and miseries of this life: we shall be got above the reach of Satan's temptations, and out of the danger of his fiery darts: we shall be above the clouds of despondency and desertion: there, all tears shall be wiped from our eyes; and all sin, the cause of those tears, rooted out of our hearts: and there, finally, we shall neither want any thing that we would have, nor desire any thing but what we have. Add to this, the infinite happiness of our vision and fruition of God: we shall there see the Father of lights, by his own rays: we shall see the sun of righteousness, lying in the bosom of the Father of lights: we shall feel the eternal warmth and influence of the Holy Ghost, springing from both these lights: there, you shall see God no longer darkly through a glass, but face to face; without interruption, without obscurity: and, if it now cause such joy, when God doth but sometimes beam in a half-glance of himself into the soul, oh! then, within what bounds can our joy contain itself, when we shall fix our eyes upon God's, and lie under the free and unchecked rays of the Deity beating full upon us, and be ourselves made strong enough to bear them? There we shall corporeally draw nigh unto Christ's glorious body, and put our fingers into the print of the nails, and thrust our hands into his side: and search and sound those blessed fountains, from whence flowed forth his blood and our salvation: there we shall forever converse with innumerable hosts of holy angels, and the spirits of just men made perfect; and join with the assembly of the first-born patriarchs, prophets, and apostles, and holy martyrs of all ages, since the beginning of the world: and, with infinite delight, mutually rehearse the mercies of the great

God, and sing his praises; there, we shall perpetually exult in the smiles of God, and live in eternal ecstasies and raptures; such as we never knew what they meant, no not when we were here most spiritual. And, when God hath wound off time from its great reel, when he shall sound the resurrection, and summon to judgment; then, shall our happy souls meet their expecting bodies, with unspeakable joy and vital embraces; these lumps of clay shall be refined and clarified: the glories of the soul shall shine through them; and they themselves shine with a luster, clear as the sun in its brightness. And, then, both soul and body shall enter into the entire fruition of those joys, the greatness of which we cannot express, but only by saying, we know not what they are. This is the inconceivable reward of the godly.

(2) As the reward of the godly shall be inconceivably glorious; so *the doom*, that shall pass upon all the wicked and ungodly of the world, shall be unspeakably full of terror.

And this doom contains in it a twofold punishment: the one, privative; the *pæna damni*, or punishment of loss; the other, positive; or *pæna sensus*, the punishment of sense. The infliction of these two will be the full execution of the last sentence upon them.

[1] As for the punishment of loss, we may consider it, either in respect of those things, which once they had; or in respect of those things, which they might have had, had it not been through their own willful default.

1st. If we consider their loss in regard of the things which once they had, so it is twofold: for they have lost that, which they counted their happiness; and they have lost that, which might have made them truly happy.

(1st) They lose that, which they accounted their happiness: that is, the world; the pleasures, profits, and honors of the world.

These are the things, which send many to hell; but do not descend with them thither, to relieve and comfort them there. Dives riots, on earth: but, in hell, cannot obtain one poor trembling drop of water, to cool his flaming tongue. Tell me, what will it avail you, that you have lived in all affluence and luxury? The time is coming, when these things shall be no more, or no more yours. And, oh, then! tell me, what sad losers will those men be, who have lost their souls to gain the world: and yet must, at last, lose the world together with their souls!

(2dly) They shall be punished with the loss of that, which might

have made them truly and eternally happy, had they been wise to improve it.

Here, God strives with them by his word, by his Spirit, by his patience, by his providence: he follows them from day to day, from ordinance to ordinance; with threatenings, with exhortations, with promises, with expostulations: "Why will ye die? Turn ye, and live: for, as I live, saith the Lord, I have no pleasure in the death of him that dieth:" yea, God sends his Spirit to strive with them; prompts conscience to fright them; and all to reduce them: and this might have proved their salvation, had they wisely managed it. But, in hell, all this too is lost: there, no day of mercy riseth upon them; no patience, nor long-suffering: no awakening providences, nor converting ordinances: nor any possibility of a better estate. And, certainly, if there be any reflection in hell, that will cut the soul to the quick, it will be this: that once it enjoyed such fair opportunities and overtures for heaven, but neglected them; and now hath lost them forever, forever, without hope. Thus they shall lose what they once enjoyed.

2dly. Their greatest loss is of those things, which they might have enjoyed: and that is, in a word, all the happiness and glory of which the saints stand possessed in heaven.

(1st) They lose the presence and enjoyment of God, which is the very heaven of heaven itself.

Indeed, heaven is not heaven, without him; and hell could not be hell, were God there. It is true, God is present with the damned in his essence, for "if I descend into hell," saith the Psalmist, "thou art there;" and he is present, by his power, to torment them: but the comfortable presence of God they are forever cut off from. And oh! for the soul to be cut off from God, is as great a loss, as for the stream to be cut off from the fountain, or a beam to be cut off from the sun. And, yet, this is the sentence of that great judgment, "Depart from me, ye cursed." Depart from thee, Lord, who art everywhere! Oh! whither shall we flee? Happy were it for us, could we depart from thee, where thou art not; but most wretched and accursed, that we must depart from thee, and yet be where thou thyself art: withdraw the presence of thy wrath and power, or vouchsafe the presence of thy love and favor, and it will be no hell whither thou sendest us. It is not so much the exquisite torments, as the loss of God's gracious presence, that makes hell insufferable: were but God's gracious presence with them, the damned could lie down in everlasting flames, as comfortably as in beds of roses: but, to be deprived of those glorious communica-

tions of God which the saints enjoy, when they see him face to face, without obscurity: when they enjoy him continually, without interruption; when they delight in him eternally, without satiety; this is a loss, as the joys themselves are, altogether inconceivable.

(2dly) They lose all that additional glory, which the saints possess: a glorious habitation, the palace of the great king; glorious society, saints and angels, yea and Christ himself: glorified bodies, sparkling with the radiance of spiritual qualities.

[2] As for the second part of their punishment, which is that of sense, our Saviour briefly sums it up in two things: the worm, that never dieth; and the fire, that never goeth out: Mark ix. 44: within, the worm gnaws them; and, without, the fire burns them.

1st. Conscience is this never-dying worm, which shall eternally sting and torture them.

And this is their misery, that they themselves must be their own merciless tormentors. Those, who have but in this life lain under the horrors of despair, sadly know what an inexorable tyrant conscience is: how many doth it now force in the extreme anguish and horror of their souls, to cry out, "we are damned, we are damned!" Oh! then, what anguish will it cause in hell, when they shall pronounce themselves damned, and not lie; and have nothing of hope or possibility left to mitigate it! Every sin, which they have committed, shall, like so many vipers, crawl about their hearts, and gnaw them through to all eternity. And the fretting review, that conscience will take of them, shall give them no rest night nor day: "Here I lie burning forever, for gratifying a base lust, for pleasing my brutish part but for a moment. Ah! fool, where are those sins, those pleasures, which I prized above heaven, and for which I ventured hell? What remains of them all, but the anguish and horror? And have I thus sold my soul for nothing? Am I thus irrecoverably lost? Oh conscience! thou stingest too late; too late, now, for any thing but my torment. These thoughts I should have had while I lived, while I was tempted to such and such a cursed sin: then had they been seasonable; but now too late, conscience, too late forever!" Thus the never-dying worm shall sting them.

2dly. The unquenchable fire shall burn them.

This shall be their doom, "Depart from me, ye cursed." Whither? "Into everlasting fire." It is a fire so elevated, as shall be able to work upon the soul itself; and so tempered, as it shall not be able to consume the body. It is a darksome, gloomy fire; that torments by its scorching, but yields no comfort by its light. The Scripture

calls it a furnace of fire, to show its rage and fierceness; and a lake of fire and brimstone, to show its vastness. Imagine you saw a sea of molten brimstone set on fire, and vomiting forth black and sooty flames, and thousands of wretched creatures plunging and wallowing in it, and you have some resemblance of what hell is.

This is the complete and final reward of all impenitent sinners, which they shall receive, according to their works.

Thus I have, in a scanty manner, opened unto the reader the doctrine of the last judgment. As we must, at the last day, so we have, in this discourse, seen the judge sitting upon his throne, and all the world arraigned before him. We have heard by what course of law God will proceed; and what sentence shall be pronounced; of infinite joy to the good, "Come, ye blessed;" of inconceivable terror to the wicked, "Go, ye cursed, into everlasting fire."

And now, this great assembly breaks up. Heaven throws open its gates to entertain Christ, marching in triumph before all his elect: and hell enlargeth itself to swallow up devils and damned wretches; who, laden with a most heavy doom, shall sink down into that bottomless pit forever and ever.

And now, what shall I say? Have I yet need to add any thing that may aggravate the terror of this great day? Methinks, fear and astonishment should shake every heart before the Lord. The very devils quake and tremble under a dreadful expectation of this day: and shall devils tremble, and yet sinful man be fearless, aye, and confident? Be astonished, oh hell! at this; that hell itself hath not such daring and undaunted sinners, as are upon earth! Do you think you shall live forever? Death is insensibly stealing away your breath; and, after death, comes judgment: and, then, believe it, you shall hear the last sentence pronounced otherwise than in books and sermons. Now, you put far from you the evil day; but this day will come clothed with horror and fearfulness on every side. That day is a day of wrath; a day of trouble and heaviness; a day of gloominess and darkness; a day of clouds, storms, and blackness; a day of the trumpet and alarm. The sun shall be darkened, the moon turned into blood, and the powers of heaven shaken: the stars shall fall as withered leaves: the graves shall cast out their dead: the heavens shall be shrivelled, and the elements molten. And then, sinner! bear up, and be as stout as thou canst. But, certainly, did men but believe these things, it

could not be that they should harden themselves in sin, as they do: could iniquity so abound in the world? would there be such rank and rotten discourse in every mouth, such oaths and curses, such riot and excess, such filthiness, villany, injustice, rapine, and oppression; did men believe, that the day is coming, wherein they must give a strict account for every idle word and vain thought, for whatsoever they have done in the body, whether it be good or bad?

For shame, therefore, let us either forever strike it out of our creed, and profess that we do not believe, that Christ shall come to judge both the quick and the dead, or live better. Let that exhortation of the Apostle take place with us, (with which I shall conclude,) 2 Pet. iii. 11, 12: "Seeing then that all these things shall be dissolved, what manner of persons ought ye to be in all holy conversation and godliness; looking for and hastening unto the coming of the day of God; wherein the heavens, being on fire, shall be dissolved, and the elements shall melt with fervent heat?"

Almighty God, give us grace that we may cast away the works of darkness, and put upon us the armor of light, now in the time of this mortal life, in which thy Son Jesus Christ came to visit us in great humility; that when he shall come again in his glorious majesty to judge both the quick and dead, we may rise to the life immortal, through him who liveth and reigneth with thee and the Holy Ghost, now and ever. Amen.

MISCELLANEOUS SERMONS.

I.

A DISCOURSE CONCERNING THE USE OF THE HOLY SCRIPTURES.

Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly in all wisdom.—COL. iii. 16.

THIS epistle, if any other, is a rich mine of heavenly treasure; and abounds, both in the discovery of Gospel mysteries, and the injunction of Christian duties. It is furnished throughout with that, which may either instruct us in knowledge, or direct us in practice: and the Apostle, having already laid down many excellent things in order to both these; and seeing it would be an endless task to discourse unto them all the truths, or exhort them to all the duties of religion in particular; therefore speaks compendiously in the words of my text, and refers them to the perfect system in which is contained an account of what a Christian ought to know or do; and that is the holy Scriptures: “Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly.”

I. The WORDS OF THE EXHORTATION are very full, and laden with weighty sense.

We may resolve them into two parts.

The nature and substance of the exhortation, which is to a diligent study and plentiful knowledge of the holy Scriptures.

The manner how we ought to be conversant with them: so that they may “dwell in us richly in all wisdom.”

i. In the FORMER, we may take notice,

1. That *the Scripture is called the word of Christ*; and that, upon a double account: both because he is the *author* that composed it; and, likewise, because he is the *subject matter* of which it principally treats.

Now, though, in both these respects, the Scriptures of the New Testament be more especially the word of Christ; yet, the Scriptures of the Old Testament, also, may, as truly and properly go under his name. For,

(1) He is *the author* of them all.

He may well write this title upon our Bibles, "The Works of Jesus Christ." All the prophets, before his incarnation, were but his amanuenses; and wrote only what he, by his Spirit, dictated to them: 2 Pet. i. 21: "Prophecy came not in old time by the will of man; but holy men of God spake as they were moved by the Holy Ghost:" and, certainly, the Holy Ghost inspired them by Christ's authority and commission; and what he declared, he took from him, and showed it unto them; John xvi. 14: "He shall receive of mine, and shall show it unto you."

(2) Christ also is the principal *subject matter* of the whole Scriptures.

The sending of Christ a Saviour into the world, is that great business which hath employed the counsel of the Father, the admiration and ministration of angels, the tongues and pens of prophets, apostles, and holy men of all ages, before the Scriptures were written, when revelation or tradition was yet the only positive rule for faith and practice. The patriarchs saw him by these: "Abraham.....saw my day, and was glad:" John viii. 56. Afterwards, the people of the Jews saw him by types, promises, and prophecies recorded in the Scriptures: he was that excellent theme, which hath filled up many chapters of the Old Testament. As the first draught of a picture represents the features and proportion of the person, but afterwards are added the complexion and life to it; so is it here: the pens of the prophets drew the first lineaments and proportion of Christ, in the Old Testament; and the pens of the apostles and evangelists have added the life and sweetness to it, in the New. Yea, Christ is so truly described in the Old Testament, by his life, by his death, by all the greater remarks of either, that, in his contest with the Jews, he appeals to it for a testimony: John v. 39: "Search the Scriptures; for.....they are they which testify of me:" and St. Peter, Acts iii. 24, affirms, that "all the prophets.....as many as have spoken, have...foretold of these days:" and, Acts x. 43, "To him give all the prophets witness." Christ, who is the true expositor, being himself the true author, makes them all speak this sense: Luke xxiv. 27: "Beginning at Moses and all the prophets, he expounded unto them in all the Scriptures, the things concerning himself." So that St. Chrysostom's observation holds true, that the Gospel was in the world before Christ: "It took root in the writings of the prophets, but blossomed in the preaching of the apostles." So that, in both these respects, the holy Scriptures may well be

called the word of Christ; of Christ, as the author, and as the subject of it.

2. And, *in both these, lies couched a very cogent argument, that may enforce this exhortation of the Apostle, and excite to a diligent study of the Scriptures.* For,

(1) Is Christ the author of them; and shall we not with all care and diligence peruse these books, which he hath composed.

The writings of men are valued according to the abilities of their authors: if they be of approved integrity, profound knowledge, and solid judgment, their works are esteemed and studied. And shall we not be much more conversant with these, which are set forth by the author, who is truth itself, and the essential wisdom of the Father? With these, that were dictated by the immediate inspiration of the Holy Ghost; and written, as it were, with a quill of the heavenly dove?

(2) Is Christ the subject of the Scriptures? And what is all other learning and knowledge but beggarly elements, if compared with this?

Here, we have the cabinet of God's counsels unlocked; the eternal purposes of his grace, in sending his Son into the world publicly declared: here, we have the stupendous history of God becoming man, of all the miracles which this God-man did upon earth, and of all the cruelties which he suffered: here, we have the description of his victory in his resurrection, of his triumph in his ascension, of his glory in his session "at the right-hand of the Majesty on High:" surely, "great is the mystery of godliness: God manifested in the flesh, justified in the Spirit, seen of angels, preached unto the Gentiles, believed on in the world, received up into glory;" as the Apostle with admiration recounts it, 1 Tim. iii. 16: and of all these wonderful passages, the Scripture gives us a perfect narrative. And on what themes, like these either for strangeness or truth, have the great wits of the world ever treated? All their learning is but idle and contemptible speculation, compared with this great mystery of a crucified Saviour; who subdued death by dying, and, without force, converted the world to believe a doctrine above reason. It was a very odd saying of Tertullian, and yet there is something in it that strikes: "Natus est Dei filius: non pudet, quia pudendum est; mortuus est: prorsus credibile est, quia ineptum est; sepultus resurrexit; certum est, quia impossibile est." "The Son of God was born; we blush not at it, because it is shameful: he died; it is credible, because it is unfit and unlikely it should be so: he rose from the dead; it is certainly true, be-

cause it is impossible." Now these unlikely and impossible things, judged so by human reason, these deep things of God, the Scripture declares; and declares them in such a manner, as convinceth even reason itself to assent to them, though it cannot comprehend them. If, therefore, you desire to know Christ and him crucified, and those mysterious doctrines which the wit of man could not invent, for it can hardly receive them, be conversant in the holy Scriptures: for they are the word of Christ; and reveal all the wonders of wisdom and knowledge, to which all the wisdom of the world is but folly.

ii. We may observe, in the text, the MANNER, how we ought to be conversant with the Scriptures: and that is set forth very significantly.

1. Let the word of Christ *dwell* in you.

Do not only give it the hearing, as a strange and marvellous story. Let not the memory of it vanish out of your minds, as soon as the sound of the words vanisheth out of your ears; but lay it up and lodge it in your hearts: make it familiar and domestic to you; that it may be as well known to you, as those that live in the same house with you. Read it, ponder and meditate upon it, till you have transcribed the Bible upon your hearts, and faithfully printed it in your memories.

2. Let it dwell in you *richly* or copiously.

Which may be taken, either objectively or subjectively.

Objectively. And so the sense is, that all the word of God should dwell in us. Content not yourselves with some part of it: that you read the Gospel, or New Testament, but neglect the Old; as is the practice of some vain enthusiasts: or, that you know the historical part of both, but neglect the doctrinal; which is the fond and childish custom of some, who read the Scripture as they would romances, skipping over the moral discourses as impertinent to the story. But the word of Christ dwells in us "richly," when we receive the whole doctrine contained in it, and are diligent in revolving the prophets, evangelists, apostles, every part and parcel of the heavenly-revealed truth.

Again, the word of Christ may dwell in us "richly" in the latter sense, or subjectively. And so it doth, when not only every part of it dwells in us, but when it dwells also in every part of us: in our memories, to retain it: in our minds, to meditate on it; in our affections, to love it; and in our lives, to practice it. Then doth the word of Christ dwell richly, or abundantly, in us.

3. Let it dwell richly *in all wisdom.*

The highest wisdom is, truly to know and to serve God, in order to eternal life. Now, saith the Apostle, so acquaint yourselves with the Scriptures, that you may from thence learn true wisdom; the saving knowledge, both of what is to be believed and what is to be done, in order to obtain everlasting happiness. To be conversant with it so as only to know what it contains, is not wisdom but folly. But then it dwells in you "in wisdom," when you study it, to practice it; when you endeavor to know the rule, that you may obey it. This is wisdom, here; and will end in happiness, hereafter.

II. In handling this subject, I shall only pursue the design of the Apostle, and endeavor to PRESS THESE EXHORTATIONS upon you.

And, indeed, I need not many arguments to persuade those, who have already an acquaintance with these sacred oracles, still to be conversant with them. Have you not yourselves found such clear light, such attractive sweetness and persuasive eloquence in the words of God, that all, which the tongue of man can utter for it, falls infinitely short of what it speaks on in its own behalf? Who of us have not found direction from it in cases of difficulty, solution of doubts, support under afflictions, comfort under sadness, strength against temptation, quickenings of grace, warmth of affection? And, in brief, whatsoever we could expect from the mercy of God, have we not found it in the Scriptures? And shall we need further to commend it to you by arguments, since it hath commended itself by manifold experiences?

But, so it is, that the devil knows we are disarmed and disabled, if once he can wrest "the sword of the Spirit" from us, as the Apostle calls it; and therefore labors all he can, to strike the Bible out of our hands: or, if we do read it, he strives to put on such false spectacles, as shall misrepresent every thing to us, and possess us with prejudice and objections against it.

i. I shall, therefore, before I proceed any farther, ENCOUNTER SOME OF THOSE PREJUDICED OPINIONS, WHICH MAKE THIS A CLASPED AND SEALED BOOK TO MANY.

1. Some may fear, *lest the study and knowledge of the Scriptures should only aggravate their sin and condemnation.*

On the one hand, the precepts of the law are so various, the duties so difficult, and flesh and blood so infirm and opposite; that

they cast a despairing look at them, as impossible to be fulfilled. On the other hand, they have been told that knowledge, without practice, will expose them to damnation without excuse: they have read, James iv. 17: "To him, that knoweth to do good, and doeth it not, to him it is sin:" it is an emphatic and weighty sin: and, Luke xii. 47: He, that knew his master's will, and did it not "shall be beaten with many stripes:" this they have read, and this deters them from reading any farther: if they cannot practice what they know, and if to know and not practice be only to inflame their last reckoning and to make their torments more intolerable, it is best for them to shield themselves in a safe ignorance. To this I answer,

(1) Though the word abounds with multitudes of sublime precepts and difficult duties, yet this is no discouragement from the study of it.

For, consider, that this same word is not only a light to discover what you ought to do, but a help to enable you to do it. It is the very means, that God appointed to overcome your aversion, and assist your weakness. And, if ever this be affected, it must, in an ordinary way, be, by conversing with the Scriptures. That sick man hath lost his reason, as well as his health, who should refuse to take physic, because, if it doth not work, it will but maké him the worse: the way to make it work, is by taking it. So, it is a morbid kind of arguing against the word of God, the physic of our souls, that it is mortal and deadly, if it doth not work into practice: the way to make it work into practice, is, to take it first into our knowledge. It is true, it were a great discouragement, if the Scriptures only showed you how much work you have to do, what temptations to resist, what corruptions to mortify, what graces to exercise, what duties to perform; and left all that upon your own hands: but the leaves of the Bible are the leaves of the tree of life, as well as of the tree of knowledge: they strengthen, as well as enlighten; and have not only a commanding, but an assisting office. And this the Bible doth two ways.

[1] It directs where we may receive supplies of ability, for the performance of whatsoever it requires.

It leads thee unto Christ, who is able, to furnish thee with supernatural strength, for supernatural duties: his treasury stands open for all comers; and his almighty power stands engaged to assist those who rely upon it. Be not discouraged, therefore: he, who finds us work, finds us strength; and the same Scripture, that enjoins us obedience, exhibits God's promise of bestowing upon us

the power of obeying: thou, who workest "all our works in us," and for us: Isa. xxvi. 12: and, "Work out your own salvation..... for it is God, which worketh in you both to will and to do:" Phil. ii. 12, 13. Why then should we so complain of hard sayings and grievous commandments? Have we not God's omnipotence, obliged by promise to assist, in the same words, wherein we are commanded to obey? What saith the Apostle? I am able to "do all things through Christ who strengtheneth me:" Phil. iv. 13. When, in reading the Scriptures, thou meetest with difficult and rigorous duties, the severity of mortification, the self-cruelty of plucking out right-eyes and cutting off right-hands; commend thyself to those promises of aid and assistance, which the same Scriptures hold forth, and lift up thy heart in that divine meditation of St. Augustin, "Lord, give what thou commandest, and command what thou plearest." Whilst thou thus duly dependest on Christ's strength and makest use of thine own, it is as much his honor and office to enable thee, as it is thy duty to perform what he requires.

[2] The Scripture, as it directs us to rely on the strength of Christ; so it is a means, which God hath appointed, to quicken and excite our own strength and power, to the discharge of those duties which it discovers.

Wherefore are those pressing exhortations and those dreadful threatenings, everywhere so dispersed up and down in the book of God, but that, when we are slow and dull and drowsy, the Spirit may, by these, as by so many goads, rouse us, and make us start into duty? Such a spiritual sloth hath benumbed us, that, without this quickening, we should not be diligent in the work of the Lord: and therefore David prays, Ps. cxix. 88: "Quicken me.....so shall I keep the testimony of thy mouth." But it is also the word itself, that quickens us to the obedience of the word: Ps. cxix. 50: "Thy word hath quickened me:" and, indeed, if you can come from reading the word, that so abounds with promises, with threatenings, with rational arguments, with pathetic expostulations, winning insinuations, importunate intreaties, heroic examples propounded to our imitation, with all the persuasive art and rhetoric which it becometh the majesty of the great God to use; if you can read this word, and yet find from it no warmth of affection, no quickening to duty; let me tell you, you either read it without attending to it, or else attend without believing it. It is, therefore, no discouragement from searching and studying the Scripture, that its commands are many and difficult; for it directs you whither to

go for promised strength : and, the more you converse with it, the more will you find your hearts quickened to a due obedience of it.

(2) Whereas many think that it is better not to know, than not to practice ; we must here distinguish, in regard to ignorance, which is of two kinds ; either invincible, or else affected. Invincible ignorance is such, as is conjoined with and proceeds from an utter impossibility of right information : and it ariseth only from two things ; absolute want of necessary instruction : or, want of natural capacity to receive it.

Affected ignorance is an ignorance under the means of knowledge ; and always ariseth from the neglect or contempt of them. Such is the ignorance of those, who do or may live where the Gospel is preached, and where by pains and industry they may arrive at the knowledge of the truth.

Now, here, forever to answer this objection, and to show you how necessary knowledge is, I shall lay down these two particulars.

[1] I grant, indeed, that unpracticed knowledge is a far greater sin than invincible ignorance, and exposeth to a much sorer condemnation. Hell fire burns with rage, and meets with fuel fully prepared for it, when God dooms unto it a head full of light, and a heart full of lusts : those, who know God's will, but do it not, do but carry a torch with them to hell, to fire that pile which must forever burn them. We have a common proverb, that knowledge is no burden : but, believe it, if your knowledge in the Scripture be merely speculative, and overborne by the violence of unruly lusts, this whole word will be no otherwise to you, than the burden of the law, as the prophets speak ; a burden, that will lie insupportably heavy upon you forever : better far you were born under barbarism in some dark corner of the earth, where the least gleam of gospel light never shone, and where the name of Christ was never mentioned, than to have this weighty book, a book which you have read and known, hung about you to sink you infinitely deeper in the burning lake, than a millstone hung about you can do in the midst of the sea. What St. Peter speaks of apostates, 2 Pet. ii. 21, is but too well applicable to the knowing sinner : "It had been better for them not to have known the way of righteousness, than, after they have known it, to turn aside from the commandment delivered unto them." How ! "better not to have known it?" Why ! is there any possibility to escape the condemnation of hell, without the knowledge of the way of righteousness revealed in the Scriptures ? No ; damnation

had been unavoidable without this knowledge; yet it had been better they had not known it: for here is the aggravation of their misery; better they had been damned, than to have known these truths and this rule of righteousness, and yet turn from the obedience and practice of it. O fearful state! oh dreadful doom! when a simple and genuine damnation shall be reckoned a gain and favor, in comparison with that exquisite one, which God will with all his wisdom prepare, and with all his power inflict, on those, "who, knowing the judgment of God, that they, which commit such things, are worthy of death," do, notwithstanding, persevere in them. Rom. i. 32. He, that knew his master's will and did it not, "shall be beaten with many stripes:" Luke xii. 47, and, "If I had not come and spoken unto them, they had not had sin; but now they have no cloak for their sin," saith our Saviour, John xv. 22. The sin and punishment of those, who are invincibly ignorant, is as nothing compared with that under which the knowing sinners lie.

But, do not flatter yourselves: your ignorance is not invincible. Are you not called to the knowledge of Christ? Do you not read or hear the Scriptures? Do you not enjoy gospel-ordinances and ministry? May you not, if you will be but diligent and industrious, understand that of which you are ignorant? Certainly, there is nothing, that can prove your ignorance invincible, unless it be your obstinacy, that you will not be prevailed upon to be instructed by all the means of instruction. Your ignorance must, therefore, be affected.

[2] Well, then, attend unto the second particular. Affected ignorance is a greater sin, and will be more sorely punished at the day of judgment, than unpracticed knowledge.

This kind of ignorance is so far from being pleadable as an excuse, that it is an aggravation of men's guilt, and will be so of their condemnation. There are but two things, that complete a Christian; knowledge and practice. Both these God doth strictly require. Knowledge may be without practice; but the practice of godliness cannot be without knowledge. God, I say, requires them both. Now, judge ye which is the greatest sinner: he, who labors after knowledge, though he neglect practice; or he, who neglects them both: he, who fulfills some part of God's will; or he, who fulfills nothing of it. Certainly, in your own judgment, this latter deserves to be doubly punished: once, for not doing his duty; and, again, for not knowing it, when he might. Truly, it is but just and righteous, that God should, with the highest disdain and

indignation, say unto them, "Depart from me, ye cursed, I know you not;" since they have audaciously said unto him, "Depart from us, we desire not the knowledge of thy ways." The Apostle, speaking of God's patience toward the heathen, who were invincibly ignorant of the truth, tells us, Acts xvii. 30, that "the times of this ignorance," and yet an ignorance it was that put them upon no less than brutish idolatry, "God winked at:" ignorant persons in ignorant times, whilst as yet the world was destitute of the means of knowledge and darkness overspread the face of it, God connived and winked at; but ignorant persons in knowing times, God doth not wink at, but frown upon. I am the more earnest in pressing this, because I perceive that that vile and rotten principle, unworthy of a Christian who is a child of light and of the day, is taken up by many, that it is no matter how little we know, if we do but practice what we know. What a cheat hath the devil put upon them! hath not God commanded you to know more, as well as to practice what you know? Is it likely you should practice what you know upon God's command, who will not upon his command increase your knowledge? And yet this is the usual plea of profane men: ask them why they frequent the public ordinances so seldom, they will tell you, they know more by one sermon, than they can practice: but how can such make conscience of practicing, who make none of knowing, though the same God hath enjoined them both? Yea, though they cannot practice what they know, yet let me tell them, that, for those, who live under the means of grace and may be instructed if they will, it may be as great a sin to omit a duty, out of neglect of knowing it, as out of neglect of doing it: yea, and much greater: we should ourselves judge that servant, who, while we are speaking to him, stops his ears on purpose that he might not hear what we command him; we should, I say, judge him worthy of more stripes, than he, who gives diligent ear to our commands, although he will not obey them. So it is, in this case: thou, who stoppest thine ears, and wilt not so much as hear what the will of thy Lord and Master is, deservest much more punishment than he, who takes pains to know it, although he doth it not: it is damnable, not to give God the service which he requires; but, oh insolence! not to give God, thy Lord and Master, so much as the hearing! Hath God sent man into the world, and sent the Scriptures after, as letters of instruction what we should do for him here; and will it, thinkest thou, be a sufficient excuse, when thou returnest to thy Lord, that it is true thou hadst instructions. but never openedst them, never lookedst into them? What a

fearful contempt is this cast upon the great God, never so much as to inquire what his will is, and whether or no he commands that, which is fit and reasonable for us to perform! And, therefore, refuse not to search and study the Scriptures, upon pretense that the knowledge of what you cannot fulfill will but aggravate your sin and condemnation: for, be assured of it, greater sin and sorer condemnation can no man have, than he, who neglects the means of knowledge, thereby to disoblige himself from practice. Again, the Scriptures were given to assist us in the performance of those duties, which they require from us: they do not only inform the judgment, but quicken the will and affections, and strengthen the whole soul to its duty.

2. Some will say, that *the reading of the Scriptures possesseth them with strange fears, and fills them with incredible terrors*. It raiseth up such dreadful apparitions of hell and the wrath of God, as make them a terror to themselves. To this I answer,

(1) It may be, thy condition is such as requires it.

Possibly, thou art in a state of wrath; and wouldst thou not be under the apprehensions of it? Thou art under the guilt of thy sins; and, then, no wonder that the voice of God should be terrible unto thee. It is most unreasonable to hate the word, as Ahab hated Micaiah, because it prophesieth no good concerning thee: alas! what good can it speak, so long as thou thyself continuest evil?

(2) It is not so much the Scripture, as thine own evil conscience, that haunts and terrifies thee.

When thou readest that dreadful threatening, Ezek. xviii. 4, "The soul that sinneth, it shall die," there were nothing of terror in it, did not thy guilty conscience witness against thee, that thou art the man: it is this, that turns and levels all God's artillery against thee. Get, therefore, a conscience pacified upon good grounds; and the very threatening of the word will speak to thee, not so much terror from the dreadfulfulness of the wrath and condemnation denounced, as joy, that thou hast escaped it.

(3) It may be, the word of God, by working in thee the spirit of fear, is preparing thee for the spirit of adoption; for that, usually, ushers in this.

We find the gaoler trembling, before we find him rejoicing. There were mighty and rending winds, earthquakes, and fire, all terrible; before there came the still voice, in which God was, 1 Kings xix. 12: so God, in convictions, many times prepares the way by thunders and earthquakes, by the thundering of his word

and the trembling of our own consciences, before he comes to us in the still and sweet voice of peace and comfort. And, certainly, they are much more afraid than hurt, whom God by his terrors thus frights into heaven.

3. But some may still say, *their fears are so strong, that they will drive them into desperation or distraction, if they longer pore over those dreadful things, which the Scripture contains.*

I answer, there is not one line or syllable in the whole book of God, that gives the least ground for despair. Nay, there are the most supporting comforts, which a poor, fearful, trembling soul can desire: "Come unto me, all ye that labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest:" Matt. xi. 28. "Him that cometh to me I will in no wise cast out:" John vi. 37. "Return unto the Lordfor he will abundantly pardon:" Isa. lv. 7. "I, even I, am he that blotteth out thy transgressions for mine own sake, and will not remember thy sins:" Isa. xliii. 25; and innumerable such like. Now, if men will only take "the sword of the Spirit" to wound them, and not also the balm of the Spirit to heal them, they may, through their own fault, especially when they read the Scriptures with the devil's commentaries, fret themselves into despair.

4. Some may say, *"Certainly, it cannot be thus necessary, that the word of Christ should dwell thus richly and abundantly in all Christians. It is requisite, indeed, for ministers, whose calling it is to teach and instruct others, that they should have this abundance of Scripture dwelling in them; but, for us, who are to receive the law at their mouth, a competent knowledge in the fundamentals of religion may well be sufficient. We know, that Christ is the Son of God; that he came into the world to save sinners; and that, if we would be saved by him, we must believe in him; and such chief points of Christianity, which are sufficient to salvation."* To this I answer,

(1) God may well expect a more plentiful measure of the word to dwell in ministers; because it is not only their general, but particular calling to peruse and study it.

There is, therefore, a twofold fullness: a fullness of the private Christian; a fullness of the treasurer or steward, to whose charge the oracles of God are committed, and who is to communicate knowledge to the people. This being the minister's office, it is his duty, especially, to abound and to be enriched in the knowledge of the Scripture. But,

(2) Wherefore must the word of Christ dwell so richly in ministers? Is it for themselves only, or is it to instruct their flock?

What! And can it be necessary for them to teach, and yet unnecessary for you to learn? Are they bound to search into the depth of gospel mysteries, to inform you of them; and is it enough for you, only to know the first principles and rudiments? Certainly, whatsoever God requires the minister to teach, that he requires you to learn. Now would you yourselves judge the minister to have sufficiently discharged his duty, that should only in the general preach, that we are all sinners; that Christ, the Son of God, came into the world to save us; that the glory of heaven and the torments of hell shall be the rewards of obedience, or disobedience? If these few absolutely necessary and fundamental truths were all, you might well think the ministry to be a very easy or a very needless office. If, then, it is our duty to reveal to you the whole counsel of God, and to withhold nothing from you of all those mysteries which the Scripture contains, whereof some give life, others light, some are vital, others ornamental; you cannot with reason but conclude, that, if we are obliged to teach these things, you also are obliged to learn and know them.

(3) It is a most destructive principle, that many have, through sloth and laziness, taken up, that a little knowledge will suffice to bring them to heaven.

Certainly, God would never have revealed so many deep and profound mysteries in his word, if it were not necessary that they should be known and believed. Shall we think all the rest of the Bible superfluous, except a few plain practical texts? What God hath recorded in the Scripture, is written for our instruction. It is true, if we have not the means of instruction, nor are in a possibility of attaining it, a less measure of knowledge, answered by a conscientious practice, may suffice for our salvation: but, for us, who have "line upon line and precept upon precept," to satisfy ourselves with a few of the common principles, slighting the rest as nice and unnecessary points, for us to neglect knowledge, argues defect of grace; for, wheresoever true grace is, there will be a most earnest endeavor to grow daily in both: and yet multitudes everywhere, even of those who abhor grosser sins, as wearing, drunkenness, and the like, yet take up with a few notions of religion, that all are sinners and all must perish, unless Christ save them, &c. This they knew, as soon as they knew any thing; and more than this, they will not know; they will not trouble their heads with any farther discoveries, nor look deep into the mysteries of godliness; contenting themselves that they have, as they think, knowledge enough to bring them to heaven.

Let me tell them, that though, where there are not means of knowledge, a little must suffice for salvation; yet, where God doth afford plentiful means, the knowledge of those very things becomes necessary to them, of which others might safely be ignorant.

5. Some may object, *that they have found, by experience, that the study of Scripture hath many times made them the worse: it hath alarmed their lusts, and put them in an uproar.* Such and such suits were quiet, till they read in the word a command against them: therefore, they are discouraged, and think it best to forbear the study of the Scripture; since they find, that, by forbidding sin, it only rouses and awakens it. I answer,

(1) This was St. Paul's very case: Rom. vii. 8; "Sin taking occasion by the commandment, wrought in me all manner of concupiscence."

Now this effect is merely accidental, and is not to be imputed unto the holy word of God, but to the wicked heart of man, which takes a hint (so desperately corrupt is it) from God's forbidding sin, to put itself in mind of committing it.

(2) Thou complainest, that the word exciteth to corruptions; but it doth it no otherwise, than the sun draws smoke and foul smell out of a dunghill.

It doth not increase, but unhappily excites them: the very same lusts lay hid in the heart before: there they lay, like so many vipers and serpents, asleep, till the light and warmth of the word made them stir and crawl about. And this advantage thou mayst make of it, that, when thy corruptions swarm thick about thee, upon the disturbance which the law of God hath made among them, thou mayst thence see what a wicked heart and nature thou hast; how much filth and mud there lieth at the bottom of it, which presently riseth upon the first stirring: this may make thee vile in thine own eyes, and deeply humbled under the sad and serious consideration of thy indwelling sin: it is the very use, which the Apostle makes, in the same case: Rom. vii. 24: "Oh wretched man that I am! who shall deliver me from the body of this death?" When humors are in motion, we soon perceive what is the state of our body; and when corruptions are once stirred, we may thereby easily know the state and condition of our souls.

(3) The same word, which doth thus occasionally stir up sin, is the best means to beat it down.

You may perceive by this, that there is somewhat in the word, which is extremely contrary to your sins, since they do so rise and

arm against it: their great enemy is upon them; and this alarm, that they take, is but before their overthrow. It may be, the mud is only stirred that it might be cast out, and your hearts cleansed from it. Be not discouraged, therefore: for there is no means in the world, so adapted to the destruction and subduing of sin, as the Scripture; though, at first, it may seem, instead of subduing sins, to strengthen them.

6. Many are discouraged from studying the Scripture, *because their memories are so treacherous and unfaithful, that they can retain nothing*: when they have read the Scripture, and would recollect what they have read, they can give no account of it, either to themselves or others. Nothing abides upon them: and therefore they think it were as good give over, as thus continually to pour water into a sieve; and inculcate truths upon such a leaky memory, where all runs out.

(1) This should rather put thee on a more frequent and diligent study of the Scripture, than discourage thee from it.

More pains will supply this defect: thou must the oftner prompt, and the oftner examine thyself, the more forgetful thou art. Memory is the soul's steward; and, if thou findest it unfaithful, call it the oftner to account. Be still following it with "line upon line and precept upon precept," and continually instill somewhat into it. A vessel, set under the fall of a spring, cannot leak faster than it is supplied: a constant dropping of this heavenly doctrine into the memory will keep it, that, though it be leaky, yet it never shall be empty.

(2) Scripture truths, when they do not enrich the memory, yet may purify the heart.

We must not measure the benefit we receive from the word, according to what of it remains, but according to what effect it leaves behind. Lightning, than which nothing sooner vanisheth away, yet often breaks and melts the hardest and most firm bodies in its sudden passage. Such is the irresistible force of the word: the Spirit often darts it through us: it seems but like a flash, and gone; and yet it may break and melt down our hard hearts before it, when it leaves no impression at all upon our memories. I have heard of one, who, returning from an affecting sermon, highly commended it to some; and, being demanded what he remembered of it, answered, "Truly, I remember nothing at all; but, only, while I heard it, it made me resolve to live better than ever I have done, and so by God's grace I will." Here was now a sermon lost to the memory, but not to the affections. To the same purpose, I

have somewhere read a story of one, who complained to an aged holy man, that he was much discouraged from reading the Scripture, because his memory was so slippery, that he could fasten nothing upon it which he read: the old hermit (for so as I remember he was described) bid him take an earthen pitcher, and fill it with water: when he had done it, he bid him empty it again, and wipe it clean that nothing should remain in it; which when the other had done, and wondered to what this tended, "Now," saith he, "though there be nothing of the water remaining to it, yet the pitcher is cleaner than it was before: so, though thy memory retain nothing of the word thou readest, yet thy heart is the cleaner for its very passage through."

(3) Never fear your memory; only pray for good and pious affections.

Affection for the truths, which we read or hear, makes the memory retentive of them. Most men's memories are like jet, or electrical bodies, that attract and hold fast only straws or feathers, or such vain and light things: discourse to them of the affairs of the world, or some idle and romantic story, their memories retain this as faithfully as if it were engraven on leaves of brass; whereas the great and important truths of the gospel, the great mysteries of heaven and concerns of eternity, leave no more impression upon them, than words on the air in which they are spoken. Whence is this, but only that the one sort work themselves into the memory through the interest they have got in the affections, which the other cannot do? Had we but the same delight in heavenly objects, did we but receive the truth in the love of it, and mingle it with faith in the hearing, this would fix that levity and fickleness of our memories, and make every truth as indelible, as it is necessary.

7. Others complain, *that the Scripture is obscure, and difficult to be understood*: they may as well, and with as good success, attempt to spy out what lies at the center of the earth, as search into the deep and hidden mysteries, which no human understanding can fathom or comprehend. To this I answer,

(1) It is no wonder, if there are such profound depths in the word of God, since it is a system and compendium of his infinite and unsearchable wisdom; that wisdom, which, from the beginning of the world, hath been hid in God.

Those deep truths, which your understanding cannot reach, require your humble veneration.

(2) The Scripture is suited to every capacity.

It is, as it is commonly expressed, a ford, wherein a lamb may

wade and an elephant swim. And, herein, is the infinite wisdom of God seen, in wreathing together plain truths with obscure, that he might gain the more credit to his word: by the one, instructing the ignorance of the weakest; by the other, puzzling and confounding the understanding of the wisest. This also adds a beauty and ornament to the Scripture: as the beauty of the world is set off by a graceful variety of hills and vallies, so is it in the Scripture there are sublime truths, which the most aspiring reason of man cannot overtop; and there are more plain and easy truths, in which the weakest capacity may converse with delight and satisfaction: no man is offended with his garden, for having a shady thicket in it; no more should we be offended with the word of God, that, among so many fair and open walks, we here and there meet with a thicket, which the eye of human reason cannot look through.

(3) Those truths, which are absolutely necessary to salvation, are as plainly, without either obscurity or ambiguity, recorded in the Scripture, as if they were, as the Mohammedans think concerning their Alcoran, written with ink made of light.

There, the necessity of faith in Jesus Christ, of repentance for dead works, of a holy and mortified life, are so clearly set down, that scarce have there any been found so impudent, as to raise controversies about them: and is it not peevish, to quarrel at the word for being obscure in those things, which if thou hast used thy utmost diligence to understand, the ignorance of them shall not at all prejudice thy salvation? Bless God, rather, that he hath so clearly revealed the necessary and practical duties of a Christian life, that those are not involved in any mystical or obscure intimations; but that thou mayst, without doubt or dispute, know what is of absolute necessity, to be either believed or practiced, in order to salvation. Be assured of this, that what with all thy labor and diligence thou canst not understand, thou needst not; and that what is needful, is plain and obvious, and thou mayst easily understand it.

(4) The Scripture is obscure: but hath not God offered us sufficient helps for the unfolding of it?

Have you not the promise of his Spirit to illuminate you? 1 Cor. ii. 10: "God hath revealed them to us by his Spirit: for the Spirit searcheth all things, yea the deep things of God." Have we not his minister, whose office it is to instruct us, and lead us into the inmost sense of the Scripture? Nay, have we not the Scripture itself, which is the best interpreter of its own meaning? Usually, if it speak more darkly in one place, it speaks the same truth more

clearly in another: compare Scripture with Scripture, and you will find it holds a light unto itself: the oftener you read and the more you ponder on those passages that are abstruse, the more you will find them clear up to your understanding. So that neither is this any reasonable discouragement from studying the holy Scriptures.

8. Others may say, *they are doubtful, because they see many of those, who have been most conversant in the Scripture, perverted and carried aside into damnable errors, and yet still have pleaded Scripture for the defense of them.* I answer,

True, the devil hath, in these our days, busied himself to bring a reproach upon Scripture, through the whims and giddiness of those, who have pretended most acquaintance with it. But, let not this be any discouragement: for this ariseth not directly from the influence which the Scripture hath on them, which is the rule of truth only; but from the pride and self-conceit of a few notionists, who wrest it to their own perdition: and, though they boast much of Scripture to countenance their opinions; yet Scripture, misunderstood and misapplied, is not Scripture. Indeed there is no other way to discern truth from error, but only by the Scripture rightly understood; and there is no way rightly to understand it, but diligently to search it. But, to say that therefore we must not read the Scripture, because some wrest it to their own destruction, is alike reasonable, as to say, that therefore we must not eat nor drink, because that some eat to gluttony and others drink to giddiness and madness. The Apostle St. Peter tells us, that, in St. Paul's epistles, there were "some things hard to be understood, which the unlearned and unstable wrest, as they do also the other Scriptures, unto their own destruction;" 2 Pet. iii. 16. Shall we therefore conclude, that neither his epistle nor any other of the Scriptures should be read by us; because that, in some, instead of nourishment, they have occasioned only wind, and ill-humors? If this had been his purpose, it had certainly been very easy for him to have said, "Because they are hard to be understood, and many wrest them to their own destruction, therefore beware that you read them not:" but, instead of this, he draws another inference, ver. 17, 18, "Ye therefore, beloved.....beware lest ye also, being led away with the error of the wicked, fall from your own steadfastness: but grow in grace, and in the knowledge of our Lord.....Jesus Christ:" he saith not, "Beware that you read them not," but, "Beware how you read them." This is the true apostolic caution, which tends not to drive us from the Scriptures, but

to make us more studious and inquisitive in them, lest we also be perverted by the cunning craftiness of men, who lie in wait to deceive. And this, the primitive fathers thought the best and surest means, to preserve their people from error and seduction: it were almost endless to recite to you those many passages, wherein they do most pathetically exhort all, of all ranks and conditions, of each sex, of all ages, to a diligent perusal of the holy Scriptures; and, so far were they from taking it up in a language unknown to the vulgar, or debarring the laity from reading it, that the translations of it into the common tongue of each country were numerous, and their exhortations scarce more vehement and earnest in any thing, than that the people would employ their time and thoughts in revolving them. It is therefore a most certain sign, that that Church hath false wares to put off, which is of nothing more careful than to darken the shop: and, assuredly, the wresting of the Scriptures by some who read them, cannot occasion the destruction of more, than that damnable idolatry and those damnable heresies have done, which have been brought into and are generally owned and practiced by the Church of Rome, through not reading them.

ii. Thus you see, as it was in Josiah's time, under how much dust and rubbish this "book of the law" lies. I have endeavored to remove it. And shall now proceed to those ARGUMENTS, WHICH MAY PERSUADE YOU TO A DILIGENT SEARCH AND PERUSAL OF THE SCRIPTURES.

The Jews, indeed, were so exact, or rather superstitious, in this, that he was judged a despiser of those sacred oracles, who did not readily know how often every letter of the alphabet occurred in them. God hath made use of this precision to hand down his word to us, unvaried and uncorrupted. It is not such a scrupulous search of the Scripture, to which I now exhort you: but, as God hath left it to us a rich treasure, a dear pledge of his love and care; so we should diligently attend to a rational and profitable study of it.

There are but two things, in general, which commend any writing to us: either that it discovers knowledge, or directs practice; that it informs the judgment, or reforms the life. Both of these are eminently the characters of this book of God. And therefore David tells us, Ps. xix. 7, the law of God converts the soul, and makes wise the simple: it is a light, not only to our heads, but it

"is a lamp unto our feet, and a light unto our path:" Ps. cxix. 105. Let us consider it, in both aspects.

1. In point of *knowledge*, as it perfects the understanding; and so it will appear, in sundry particulars, how excellent a study it is.

(1) The Scripture discovers unto us the knowledge of those truths, which the most improved natural reason could never sift out, and which are intelligible only by Divine revelation.

God hath composed two books, by the diligent study of which we may come to the knowledge of himself: the book of the creatures, and the book of the Scriptures. The book of the creatures is written in those great letters of heaven and earth, the air and sea; and, by these, we may spell out somewhat of God: he made them for our instruction, as well as our service: there is not a creature, that God hath breathed abroad upon the face of the earth, but it reads us lectures, of his infinite power and wisdom; so that it is no absurdity to say, that, as they are all the words of his mouth, so they are all the works of his hands: the whole world is a speaking workmanship; Rom. i. 20: "The invisible things of God.....are clearly seen.....by the things that are made, even his eternal power and Godhead:" and, indeed, when we seriously consider how God hath poised the earth in the midst of the air, and the whole world in the midst of a vast and boundless nothing; how he hath hung out those glorious lights of heaven, the sun, the moon, and stars, and made paths in the sky for their several courses; how he hath laid the sea on heaps, and so girt it in, that it may possibly overlook, but not overflow the land; when we view the variety, harmony, and law of the creation; our reason must needs be very short, if we cannot from these collect the infinite wisdom, power, and goodness of the Creator: so much of God as belongs to these two great attributes of Creator and governor of the world, the book of nature may plainly discover to us. But, then, there are other more retired and reserved notions of God; other truths, that nearly concern ourselves and our eternal salvation to know and believe, which nature could never give the least glimpse to discover: what signature is there stamped upon any of the creatures of a Trinity in Unity, of the eternal generation or temporal incarnation of the Son of God? What creature could inform us, of our first fall, and guilt contracted by it? Where can we find the copy of the covenants of works or of grace printed upon any of the creatures? Though the great sages of the world were nature's secretaries, and ransacked its most abstruse mysteries, yet all their learning and knowledge could not

discover the sacred mystery of a crucified Saviour: these are truths, which nature is so far from searching out, that it can scarce receive them when revealed: 1 Cor. ii. 14: "The natural man receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God.....neither can he know them, because they are spiritually discerned:" the light, that can reveal these, must break immediately from heaven itself: and so it did, upon the Prophets, Evangelists, and Apostles; the penmen of the Holy Scriptures. And, if it were their singular privilege, that the Holy Ghost should descend into their breasts; and so possess them with divine inspirations, that what they spake or wrote became oracular: how little less is ours; since the Scriptures reveal to us the very same truths, which the Spirit revealed to them! God, heretofore, spake in them; and, now, he speaks by them unto us: their revelations are become ours: the only difference is, that what God taught them by extraordinary inspiration, the very same truths he teacheth us in the Scripture, by the ordinary illumination of his Spirit. Here, therefore, whilst we diligently converse in the book of God, we enjoy the privilege of prophets: the same word of God, which came unto them, comes also unto us; and that, without those severe preparations and strong agonies, which sometimes they underwent, before God would inspire them with the knowledge of his heavenly truth.

(2) The knowledge, which the Scripture teacheth, is, for the matter of it, the most sublime and lofty in the world.

All other sciences are but poor and beggarly elements, if compared with this. What doth the naturalist, but only busy himself in digging a little drossy knowledge, out of the bowels of the earth? The astronomer, who ascends highest, mounts no higher than the celestial bodies, the stars and planets; which are but the outworks of heaven. But the Scripture pierceth much farther, and lets us into heaven itself; there, it discovers the majesty and glory of God upon his throne, the eternal Son of God sitting at his right hand making a prevailing and authoritative intercession for us, the glittering train of cherubim and seraphim, an innumerable company of angels, and the spirits of just men made perfect; so that, indeed, when you have this book laid open before you, you have heaven itself and all the inconceivable glories of it laid open to your view. What can be more sublime, than the nature of God? And, yet, here, we have it so plainly described by all its most glorious attributes and perfections, that the Scripture doth but beam forth light to an eye of faith, whereby it may be enabled to see him who is invisible. But, if we con-

sider those gospel mysteries which the Scripture relates; the hypostatic union of the divine and human natures, in Christ's incarnation; the mystical union of our persons to his, by our believing; that the Son of God should be substituted, in the stead of guilty sinners; that he, who knew no sin, should be made a sacrifice for sin, and the justice of God become reconciled to man, through the blood of God: these are mysteries so infinitely profound, as are enough to puzzle a whole college of angels. Now these the Scripture propounds unto us, not only to pose, but to perfect our understanding: for that little knowledge, unto which we can attain in these things, is far more excellent than the most comprehensive knowledge of all things else in the world: and, where our scanty apprehensions fall short of fathoming these deep mysteries, the Apostle hath taught us to seek it out with an *ὠ βάθος*: Rom. xi. 33: "Oh the depths of the riches, both of the wisdom and knowledge of God! how unsearchable are his judgments, and his ways past finding out!"

(3) The Scripture is an inexhaustible fountain of knowledge: the more you draw from it, the more still springs up. It is a deep mine, and the farther you search into it, still the richer you find it.

It is tedious to read the works and writings of men frequently, because we are soon at the bottom of what they deliver, and our understanding hath nothing new to refresh it: but, in reading the Scripture, it fares with us as it did with those whom Christ miraculously fed; the bread multiplied under their teeth, and increased in the very chewing of it: so, here, while we ruminate and chew on the truths of the Scripture, they multiply and rise up thicker under our meditation. One great cause of the neglect, of which many are guilty in reading the holy Scriptures, is a fear that they shall but meet with the same things again, which they have already read and known; and this they account tedious and irksome: indeed if they read it only superficially and slightly, it will be so: but those, who fix their minds to ponder and meditate upon the word, find new truths arising up to their understanding, which they never before discovered. Look as it is in a starry night, if you cast your eyes upon many spaces of the heavens, at the first glance perhaps you shall discover no stars there; yet, if you continue to look earnestly and fixedly, some will emerge to your view, that were before hid and concealed: so is it with the holy Scriptures: if we only glance curiously upon them, no wonder we discover no more stars, no more glorious truths beam-

ing out their light to our understanding. St. Augustin found this so experimentally true, that he tells us, in his third epistle, that though he should, with better capacity and greater diligence, study all his lifetime, from the beginning of his childhood to decrepit age, nothing else but the holy Scriptures; yet they are so compacted and thick set with truths, that he might daily learn some thing, which before he knew not. God hath, as it were, studied to speak compendiously in the Scriptures: what a miracle of brevity is it, that the whole duty of man, relating both to God and his neighbor, should be all comprised in ten words! not a word, but, were the sense of it drawn out, were enough to fill whole volumes; and therefore the Psalmist, Ps. cxix. 96: "I have seen an end of all perfection; but thy commandment is exceeding broad." When we have attained the knowledge of those things that are absolutely necessary to salvation, there yet remain such depths of wisdom, both in the manner of Scripture expression, and in the mysteriousness of the things expressed, that, after our utmost industry, still there will be left new truths to become the discovery of a new search.

(4) The Scripture exhibits to us that knowledge, which is necessary to eternal salvation.

"This is life eternal, that they might know thee the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom thou hast sent:" John xvii. 3. And this knowledge the Scriptures alone can afford us: John v. 39. So 2 Tim. iii. 15. We need not, therefore, inquire after blind traditions, or expect any whimsical enthusiasms: the *written word* contains whatsoever is necessary to be known in order to eternal salvation; and whosoever is wise above what is written, is wise only in impertinences. Now hath God contracted whatever was necessary for us to know, and summed it up in one book? And shall not we be diligent and industrious in studying that, which doth so necessarily concern us? Other knowledge is only to adorn and embellish nature: this is for the necessity of life, of life eternal. I have before spoken enough concerning the necessity of knowledge unto salvation, and therefore shall not farther enlarge. Therefore, as St. Peter said to Christ, "Lord, to whom shall we go? thou hast the words of eternal life:" John vi. 68: so let us answer whatsoever may seem to call us off from the diligent study of the Scriptures, Whither shall we go? To this we must cleave: with this we will converse; for here alone are the words of eternal life."

(5) The knowledge, which the Scripture discloseth, is of un doubted certainty and perpetual truth: it depends not upon proba-

bilities or conjectures, but the infallible authority of Christ himself: he hath dictated it, for whom it is impossible to lie.

The rule of our veracity or truth, is the conformity of our speech to the existence of things: but divine truth and veracity hath no other rule, besides the will of him that speaks it. He must needs speak infallible truth, who speaks things into their beings: such is the omnipotent speech of God. Whatsoever he declares is therefore true, because he declares it. No matter how strange and impossible Scripture mysteries may seem to flesh and blood; to the corrupt and captious understandings of natural men: when the word of God hath undertaken for the truth, it is as much impiety to doubt concerning them, as it is folly to question the reality of what we see with our very eyes. Nay, the information of our senses, what we see, what we hear, what we feel, is not so certain, as the truth of those things, which God reveals and testifies in the Scriptures: and therefore the Apostle, 2 Pet. i. 18, 19, speaking of that miraculous voice that sounded from heaven, (Matt. xvii. 5, "This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased,") saith, "This voice.....we heard, when we were with him in the holy mount: we have also a more sure word of prophecy;" or, as the Greek may well be rendered, "We account more sure the word of prophecy;" unto which "ye do well that ye take heed:" what! a more sure word than a voice from heaven! when God himself shall vocally bear witness to the truth! yes, we have a more sure word, and that is the word of prophecy, recorded in the Old Testament. And, hence it will follow, that, because the prophecies concerning Christ may seem somewhat obscure, in comparison with this audible voice from heaven; therefore the testimony of obscure Scripture is to be preferred before the testimony of clear sense. Now, therefore, if you would know things beyond all danger, either of falsehood or hesitation, be conversant in the Scripture; where we may take all for certain upon the word and authority of that God, who neither can deceive nor be deceived.

(6) The Scripture alone gives us the true and unerring knowledge of ourselves:

Man, who busies himself in knowing all things else, is of nothing more ignorant than of himself. The eye, which beholds other things, cannot see its own shape; and, so, the soul of man, whereby he understands other objects, is usually ignorant of its own concerns. Now, as the eye, which cannot see itself directly, may see itself by reflection in a glass: so God hath given us his Scripture, which St. James compares to a glass, James i. 23, and holds

this before the soul, wherein is represented our true state and idea.

There is a fourfold state of man, that we could never have attained to know, but by the Scriptures, viz., his state of integrity; of apostasy; of restitution; of glory.

The Scripture alone can reveal to us, what we were, in our *primitive constitution*: naturally holy; bearing the image and similitude of God, and enjoying his love; free from all inward irregularities, or outward miseries; having all the creatures subject to us, and, what is much more, ourselves.

What we were, in our state of *apostasy* or *destitution*: despoiled of all our primitive excellencies; dispossessed of all the happiness which we enjoyed, and of all hopes of any for the future, liable, every moment, to the revenge of justice, and certain once to feel it.

What we are, in our state of *restitution*, through grace: begotten again to a lively hope; adopted into the family of heaven; re deemed by the blood of Christ; sanctified and sealed by the Holy Spirit; restored to the favor and friendship of God; recovering the outlines of his image upon our souls here on earth, and expecting the perfection of it in heaven.

What we shall be, in our final state of *glory*: clothed with light; crowned with stars; satisfied with pure spiritual joys. We shall see God as he is, know him as we are known by him, love him ardently, converse with him eternally; yea a state it will be, so infinitely happy, that it will leave us nothing to hope for.

This fourfold state of man the Scripture doth evidently express. Now these are such things, as it could never have entered into our hearts to have imagined, had not the word of God described them to us; and, thereby, instructed us in the knowledge of ourselves, as well as of God and Christ.

Now let us put these six particulars together. The Scripture instructs us in the knowledge of such things, as are intelligible only by divine revelation: it teacheth us the most sublime and lofty truths: it is a most inexhaustible fountain of knowledge; the more we draw, the more still springs up: it teaches that knowledge, which is necessary to salvation: it is of undoubted certainty and perpetual truth: and, lastly, it informs us in the knowledge of ourselves. And, certainly, if there be any thirst in you after knowledge, there needs no more be spoken to persuade you to the

diligent study of the Scripture, which is a rich store and treasury of all wisdom and knowledge.

Thus we have seen how the Scriptures inform the judgment.

2. Let us now briefly see how they reform the life, and what *practical influence* they have upon the souls of men.

Here, the word of God hath a mighty operation; and that, in sundry particulars.

(1) This is that word, which convinceth and humbleth the stoutest and proudest sinners.

There are two sorts of secure sinners: those, who boast in the confidence of their own righteousness; and those, who are secure through an insensibility of their own wickedness. Both these, the word, when it is set home with power convinces, humbles, and brings to the dust. It despoils the Pharisee of all that false righteousness, of which he once boasted and to which he trusted: "I was alive without the law once," saith St. Paul: "but, when the commandment came, sin revived, and I died:" Rom. vii. 9. It awakens and alarms the senseless, seared sinner: how many have there been, who have scorned God and despised religion, whom yet one curse or threat of this word hath made to tremble and fall down before the convincing majesty and authority of it!

(2) This is that word, which sweetly comforts and raises them, after their dejections.

All other applications to a wounded spirit are improper and impertinent. It is only Scripture consolation that can ease it. The leaves of this book are like the leaves of that tree, Rev. xxii. 2, which were "for the healing of the nations." The same weapon, that wounds, must here work the cure.

(3) This is that word, which works the mighty change upon the heart, in renovation.

Take a man, who runs on in vile and desperate courses, who sells himself to do iniquity and commits all manner of wickedness with greediness; and make use of all the arguments that reason can suggest: these seldom reclaim any from their debaucheries: or if, in some few, they do reform the life; yet they can never change the heart. But that, which no other means can affect, the word of God can: Ps. xix. 7: "The law of God is perfect, converting the soul."

(4) This is that word, which strengthens and arms the people of God, to endure the greatest temporal evils, only in hope of that future reward which it promiseth.

(5) This is that word, which contains in it such a collection of

rules and duties, that whosoever observes and obeys, shall in the end infallibly obtain everlasting life.

Though I can but just mention these heads unto you, yet there is enough in them to persuade you to be diligent in the Scriptures. "In them," saith our Saviour, "ye think to have eternal life."

We are all of us guilty malefactors; but God hath been pleased to afford us the mercy of this book; and, what! shall we not so much as read for our lives?

This is that book, according to which we must either stand or fall, be acquitted or condemned eternally. The unalterable sentence of the last day will pass upon us, as it is here recorded in this Scripture. Here we may, beforehand, know our doom; and what will become of us to all eternity. "He, that believeth.....shall be saved; but he, that believeth not, shall be damned:" Mark xvi. 16. It is said, Rev. xx. 12, that when the dead stood before God to be judged, "the books were opened:" that is, the book of conscience, and the book of the Scripture. Be persuaded to open this book, and to judge yourselves out of it before the last day. It is not a sealed book to you: you may there read what your present state is, and foretell what your future will be. If it be a state of sin and wrath, search farther: there are directions how you may change this wretched state for a better. If it be a state of grace and favor, there are rules how to preserve you in it. It is a word suited to all persons, all occasions, all exigencies: it informs the ignorant, strengthens the weak, comforts the disconsolate, supports the afflicted, relieves the tempted, resolves the doubtful, directs all to those ways which lead to endless happiness: where, as the word of God hath dwelt richly in us, so we shall dwell forever gloriously with God.

MISCELLANEOUS SERMONS.

II.

A DISCOURSE UPON PROVIDENCE.

Are not two sparrows sold for a farthing? and one of them shall not fall on the ground without your Father. But the very hairs of your head are all numbered.—MATT. x. 29, 30.

THE mystery of God's providence, next to that of man's redemption, is the most sublime and inscrutable. It is easy, in both, to run ourselves off our reason: for, as reason confesseth itself at a loss, when it attempts a search into those eternal decrees, of electing sinners to salvation, and designing Christ to save them; so must it, likewise, when it attempts to trace out all those entangled mazes and labyrinths, wherein the Divine providence walks. We may sooner tire reason, in such a pursuit, than satisfy it; unless it be some kind of satisfaction, when we have driven it to a nonplus, to relieve ourselves with an *ὦ βάθος*: "Oh the depth of the.....wisdom and knowledge of God! how unsearchable are his judgments, and his ways past finding out!" Rom. xi. 33.

This knowledge, therefore, being too wonderful for us, I shall not presume to conduct you into that secret place, that pavilion of clouds and surrounding darkness, where God sits holding the helm of the world, and steering it through all the floatings of casualty and contingency to his own foreordained ends: where he grasps and turns the great engine of nature in his hands; fastening one pin, and loosening another; moving and removing the several wheels of it; and framing the whole according to the eternal idea of his own understanding. Let it content us, to consider so much of God's providence as may affect us with comfort, in reflecting on that particular care which he takes of us; rather than with wonder and astonishment, by too bold a prying into those hidden methods, whereby he exerciseth it.

Our Saviour Christ, in this chapter, giving commission to his Apostles and sending them forth to preach the gospel, obviates an objection which they might make, concerning the great danger that would certainly attend such an undertaking. To send them upon such a hated employment, would be no other than to thrust them

upon the rage and malice of the world; to send them forth as sheep into the midst of wolves, who would doubtless worry and devour them: "Sure we are to have our message derided; our persons injured; and that holy name of thine, on which we summon them to believe, blasphemed and reviled: and, though our word may prove a word of life to some few of the hearers, yet to us, who are the preachers of it, it will prove no other than death." A vile and wretched world, the while! when the gospel of peace and reconciliation shall thus stir up enmity and persecution against the ambassadors, who are appointed to proclaim it! To this our Saviour answers,

First. By showing what the extent of their adversaries' power is; how far it can reach, and what mischief it can do, when God permits it to rage to the very utmost.

And this he doth in the 28th verse; the verse immediately preceding the text: "Fear not them, which kill the body, but are not able to kill the soul:" or, as St. Luke expresseth it, chapter xii. 4, they can "kill the body," but "after that, have no more that they can do." Alas! are such men to be feared, who, when they do their worst, can only destroy your worst part; which if they do not, yet accidents or diseases will? What! are your bodies but clogs to your spirit, and prisons to your souls? And, certainly, those enemies are not very formidable, who, when they most think to hurt you, only knock off your clog, or break open your prison and let your souls escape to their desired liberty.

Secondly. Our Saviour answers, that though they can kill the body, when God permits them; yet they cannot so much as touch it, without his permission.

And this he doth, in the words of my text, by showing how punctual and particular God's providence is; even over the smallest, and those which seem the most trifling occurrences of the world. A sparrow, whose price is but mean, two of them valued at a farthing, which some make to be the tenth part of a Roman penny, and was certainly one of their least coins; whose life, therefore, is but contemptible, and whose flight seems but giddy and at random: yet it falls not to the ground, neither lights any where, "without your Father." His all-wise providence hath before appointed, what though it shall pitch on, what grains it shall pick up, where it shall lodge, and where it shall build, on what it shall live, and when it shall die. And, if your Father's providence be so critical about the small concerns even of sparrows: "fear not ye, for ye are of

more value than many sparrows;" yea, of more value than many men.

Our Saviour adds: "The very hairs of your head are all numbered." He knows how many fall off, and the precise number of those that remain; and no wonder, since he knows the number of our sins, which are far more.

Hence we learn, that God governs the meanest, the most inconsiderable and contemptible occurrences in the world, by an exact and particular providence. Do you see a thousand little motes and atoms, wandering up and down in a sunbeam? It is God, that so peoples it; and he guides their innumerable and irregular strayings. Not a particle of dust flies in a beaten road, but God raises it, conducts its uncertain motion, and by his particular care conveys it to the certain place which he had before appointed for it, nor shall the most fierce and tempestuous wind hurry it any farther. And, if God's care and providence reach thus to these minute things, which are but as it were the circumstances of nature, and little accessories to the world; certainly, man, who is the head and lord of it, for whose sake and service other creatures were formed, may very well be confident that God exerciseth an especial and most accurate providence over him and his affairs.

By this you see what the subject is, of which it is intended to treat; even the overruling and all-disposing providence of God: not a sparrow, not a hair of your heads falls to the ground, "without your Father."

But, before I proceed farther, I must take notice of two things in the words.

First. That our Saviour, speaking here of the providence of God, ascribes to him the name of our Father.

God hath many names and titles attributed unto him in the Scriptures; as Father, Lord, Creator, Redeemer, Judge, King, and God; but God is a word that denotes his essence: Lord, is a title of his dominion: Creator marks out his omnipotence: Redeemer, commends his love: Judge, is a name of fear and astonishment: and King, is a title of royal majesty: but this endearing name of Father signifies unto us his providence: for, from him, as from a father, do we expect guidance and government.

Secondly. Whereas nothing comes to pass without our Heavenly Father, this may be understood three ways; without his permission, without his ordination and concurrence, without his overruling and directing it to his own ends.

No evil comes to pass, without his *permissive* providence.

No good comes to pass, without his *ordaining* and *concurring* providence. ●

Nothing, whether good or evil, comes to pass, without the *overruling* providence of our Father, guiding and directing it to his own ends.

But, concerning this distinction of permissive, concurring, and overruling providence, I shall have occasion to speak more hereafter. My work, at present, shall be,

To describe unto you what the providence of God is, in the general notion thereof.

To prove that all affairs and occurrences, in the world, are guided and governed by Divine providence.

To answer some puzzling questions and doubts, concerning the providence of God; and some objections, which may be made against it.

I. Let us see WHAT PROVIDENCE IS.

Take it in this description: providence is an act of God, whereby, according to his eternal and most wise counsel, he preserves and governs all things; and directs them all to their ends, but chiefly to his own glory.

This providence consisteth in two things; preservation and government of his creatures.

i. One remarkable act of the providence of God, is the PRESERVATION of his creatures in their beings. He preserves them,

1. *In their species and kind, by the constant succession of them one after another*: so that, though the individuals of them are mortal and perish; yet the species or kind is immortal.

There is no kind of creature that was at first made by God, but it still continueth to this very day, and shall do so to the end of the world. And, truly, it is the wonderful providence of God, thus to perpetuate the creation: that, whereas we see an inbred enmity in some sorts of creatures against others; yet his wisdom so sways their mutual antipathies, that none of them shall ever prevail to a total extirpation and destruction of the other.

2. He preserves them, likewise, by his providence, *in their individual and particular beings*, while they have a room to fill up and an office to discharge in the universe.

Each fly and worm, as well as man (who is but the greater worm of the two) hath a work to do in the world; and, till that be finished, God sustains its being: nor shall the weakest creature be

destroyed, within the prefixed time that God hath set to its duration. There are none of us here alive this day, but have abundant cause thankfully to acknowledge the powerful and merciful providence of God, in preserving us in and rescuing us from many dangers and deaths, to which we stood exposed. It is only his visitation, that hath hitherto preserved our spirits; and, to his never-failing providence we owe it, that such frail and feeble creatures, who are liable to be crushed before the moth, liable to so many diseases and accidents, have yet a name among the living, and have not yet failed from off the face of the earth.

ii. As God preserves, so he GOVERNS all things, by his providence.

And this government consists in two things: direction of the creature's actions; and distribution of rewards and punishments, according to the actions of his rational creatures.

1. God, by his governing providence, *directs all the actions of his creatures*; yea, and by the secret, but efficacious concurrence and penetration of the divine influence, he powerfully sways and determines them which way he pleaseth.

And, from this part of his providence, brancheth forth his permission of evil actions, and his concurrence to good; both by the assistance of his common, and likewise of his special grace; and, lastly, his general influence into all the actions of our lives, all which we are enabled to perform by the almighty power of the Divine providence; which, as at first it bestowed upon us natural faculties, so by a constant concurrence it doth excite and assist those faculties to their respective operations.

2. God, by his governing providence, *distributes rewards and punishments according to our actions*.

And this part of his providence is oftentimes remarkable, even in this present life; when we see retributions of divine mercy and vengeance, signally proportioned according to men's demerits: but the more especial manifestation and execution of it is commonly reserved to the life to come; and, then, all the seeming inequalities of God's dispensations here will be fully adjusted, in the eternal recompense of the godly, and the eternal punishment of the wicked and impenitent.

Now, by this Almighty providence, God overrules and sways all things to his own glory. There is nothing comes to pass, but God hath his ends in it, and will certainly make his own ends out of it. Though the world seem to run at random, and affairs to be

huddled together in blind confusion and rude disorder; yet God sees and knows the linking together of all causes and effects; and so governs them, that he makes a perfect harmony out of all those seeming jarrings and discords. As you may observe in the wheels of a watch, though they all move with contrary motions one to the other, yet they are useful and necessary to make it go right: so is it, in these inferior things: the proceedings of Divine providence are all regular and orderly to his own ends, in all the thwartings and contrarieties of second causes. We have this expressed in that mysterious vision, Ezek. i. 10, where the providences of God are set forth by the emblem of a wheel within a wheel, one intersecting and crossing another; yet they are described to be full of eyes round about: what is this, but to denote unto us, that, though providences are as turning and unstable as wheels, though they are as thwart and cross as one wheel within another, yet these wheels are all nailed round with eyes: God sees and chooses his way in the most intricate and entangled providences that are; and so governs all things, that whilst each pursues its own inclination, they are all overruled to promote his glory.

This is providence: the two great parts of which, are preservation and government; and the great end of both these, the glory of the Almighty and All-wise God. And this is it, which our Saviour speaks of when he tells the Jews, John v. 17, "My Father worketh hitherto," viz., in preserving and governing his creatures; "and I work."

II. The second general topic propounded, was to demonstrate to you, that ALL THINGS IN THE WORLD ARE GOVERNED BY THE DIVINE PROVIDENCE.

The old philosophers, among the heathen, had very different notions concerning the government of the world. Some held, that all things were governed by an imperious and inevitable fate, to which God himself was subject: so, Chrysippus, and the Stoics. Others thought, that all was left to blind chance; and whatsoever came to pass here below was only casual and fortuitous: so, the Epicureans. Others, that the great God regarded only the more glorious affairs of heaven; but had committed the care of earthly concerns unto inferior spirits, as his under officers and deputies: so, most of the Platonists, though their master was orthodox. Others, that God's providence reached only to the great and important matters of this world; but that it was too

much a disparagement to his infinite Majesty, to look after the motion of every straw and feather, and to take care of every trivial and inconsiderable occurrence in this world: so speaks Cicero, in his Book *de naturâ Deorum*: “Magna Dii curant, parva negligunt.” How much better is that most excellent saying of St. Austin! “Tu sic curas unumquemque nostrum, tanquam solum cures; et sic omnes, tanquam singulos.” “God takes as much care of every particular, as if each were all; and as much care of all, as if all were but one particular.”

To demonstrate this all-disposing providence of God, I shall take two ways.

From the consideration of the nature and perfection of the Deity.

From the contemplation of that beauty and order, which we may observe in the world.

It is most necessary, that we should have our hearts well established in the firm and unwavering belief of this truth, that, whatsoever comes to pass, be it good or evil, we may look up to the disposer of all, to God: and, if it be good, may acknowledge it with praise; if evil, bear it with patience: since he dispenseth both the one and the other; the good to reward us, and the evil to try us.

i. To demonstrate it FROM THE BEING AND NATURE OF GOD.

This I shall do, in these following propositions, which I shall lay down as so many steps and gradations.

1. That *there is a God*, is undoubtedly clear by the light of nature.

Never was there any people so barbarous and stupid, but did firmly assent to this truth, without any other proof than the deep impress upon their hearts, and the observation of visible objects, that there was a Deity. It is neither a problem of reason, nor yet strictly an article of faith; but the unforced dictate of every man's natural conscience; where conscience is not violently perverted, and under the force of those vices, whose interest it is that there should be no God. Never was there any nation, which worshiped none; but their great sottishness was, that they worshiped many.

2. As all confess that there is a God; so, likewise, that *this God must necessarily have in himself all perfections*, as being the first principle and source of all things.

All these perfections of wisdom, power, knowledge, or the like,

which we see scattered up and down among the creatures, must all be concentrated in God: and that, in a far more eminent degree; because whatever is found in creatures is but derived and borrowed from him, and therefore it must needs follow, that, because it is of more perfection to be infinite in each perfection, therefore God is infinite in them all.

3. Among all the perfections, which are dispersed among the creatures, the most excellent is *knowledge* and *understanding*.

For this is a property, that belongs only to angels and men, who are the top and flower of the creation: and therefore, certainly, this perfection of the creatures is to be found in God; yea, and that infinitely. His knowledge and wisdom, therefore, are infinite.

4. His knowledge being thus infinite, *he both knows himself, and all other things in himself.*

(1) God perfectly knows himself: he knows the boundless extent of his own being; and, though he be infinite and incomprehensible to all others, yet is he finite and comprehended to himself: and, hence, it follows,

(2) That he knows particularly all other things. For, if he know himself perfectly, he must needs know all things besides himself; because none can perfectly know himself, that doth not fully know all that his power and strength can reach. But there is nothing, which the power of God cannot reach; for, by his power, he created all things. And, therefore, knowing his own essence, which is the cause of all, he knows every thing in the fecundity of his essence.

Thus we have demonstrated it, from the principles of reason, that God necessarily knows all things. But providence denotes more than knowledge: and, therefore,

5. This knowledge, which is in God, is not like that, which we acquire: it is not a knowledge, that depends upon the objects known, and forms ideas from the contemplation of things already existing: but it is *like the knowledge of an artificer, which causeth and produceth the things it comprehends.*

God knows them, before they are; and, by knowing them, brings them to pass. "God knows all things," saith St. Austin, on the Trinity, "not because they are; but, therefore they are, because God knew them." So that his eternal knowledge and understanding give being to every thing in the world.

6. *It appertains to him, who gives being to a thing, to preserve and govern it in its being.*

And, therefore, God giving being to all things, he also doth

maintain and provide for them. It is the very law of nature, which he hath imprinted upon all his creatures, to provide for their own offspring: we see with what solicitous affection and tenderness, even brute and irrational creatures do it: we are all the offspring of God, and he our common parent; and therefore, certainly, he, who hath inspired such parental care in all things else, doth himself much more take care to give education to all to which he hath given being. Thus, you see, it is proved that God's providence reacheth unto all things.

It might likewise be demonstrated from God's omnipresence. He is present everywhere, with and in all his creatures: and, certainly, he is not with them, as an idle and unconcerned spectator; but as the director and governor of their actions.

ii. But I shall proceed to the second sort of arguments, to prove the Divine providence.

And those are taken FROM THE CONSIDERATION OF THE FRAME AND SYSTEM OF THE WORLD; THE BEAUTY AND HARMONY, WHICH WE SEE IN NATURE.

The world is a book, wherein we may clearly read the wonderful wisdom of God. There is no creature, which doth not proclaim aloud, that God is the wise Creator and governor of it.

Who hath gilded the globe of the sun, and put on his rays? Who hath set its bounds, and measured out its race, that it should, without failing, without error or mistake, know how to make its daily and annual returns, and divide our times and seasons to the world? Who hath given a particular motion to all the voluminous orbs of heaven, and beat out a path for every star to walk in? Who hath confined the great and proud ocean, with a girdle of sand; and restrains the waves thereof, that though they be higher than the land, yet they shall not overflow it? Who poiseth the opposition and contrarieties which are in nature, in so even a balance, that none of them shall ever prevail to a total destruction of the other? Who brings up the great family of brute beasts, without tumult and disorder? Do not all these great and wonderful works speak forth the watchful providence of God; who, as he makes them by his word, so still governs them by his power?

Therefore, whatsoever we receive beneficial from them, whatsoever seems to provide for our necessities or conveniencies; it is God, who hath so dispensed the government of the world, as to make it serviceable. If the heavens turn and move for us, if the stars as so many burning torches light us in the obscurity of the

night, if the angels protect and defend us, let us acknowledge all this from the providence of God only. It is he, who turns the heavens round their axis: he lights up the stars: he commands the angels to be ministering spirits, guards, and sentinels about us. If the fire warm us, the air refresh us, the earth support us, it is God, who hath kindled the fire, who hath spread forth the air, and stablished the earth upon the pillars of his own decree, that it should not be shaken. And let us know, too, that, when we want these creatures for our sustentation, if the heavens, if the angels, if the earth, if the sea, if all things should fail us, yea band and set themselves against us; yet God, who provides for us by them, can also, if he please, provide for us without them.

III. The third general topic, which remains, is to ANSWER SOME QUESTIONS AND DOUBTS which may be made, and have indeed been strongly urged, against the government of the world by providence.

i. "If the world be governed by providence, WHENCE COMES IT, THAT WICKED AND UNGODLY MEN FLOURISH AND PROSPER? That God shines upon their tabernacles, and drops fatness upon all their paths: whereas, on the contrary, the godly are often exposed to poverty, contempt, and reproaches; persecuted by men, and afflicted by God? Would it not be as agreeable to the divine goodness, to cast abroad the wealth, the pomp, and glory of this world with an undeciding hand; leaving men to scramble for them as they can; as that he should, with a particular and studied care, advance those who contemn him, and crush those who humbly trust and depend upon him? Can I think the world is governed by the providence of a just God, when usually unjust men govern the world under him? When haughty sinners, who despise him, have power likewise to control others? Is it wisdom, to put a sword into that hand, which will turn the point of it against the giver? Is it justice, to empower them to all those acts of rapine, violence, and oppression, which they commit? And shall we call that Providence, which is neither wise nor just? One hath an exhausted store to supply his dissolute luxury and riot; another, scarce necessities to maintain a poor life spent in the commands of God: here, a wicked Dives, who worshiped no other god but his own belly, feasts deliciously every day; whilst a godly Lazarus serves at this glutton's gate, and entertains the dogs with licking his sores: and, what! doth God's particular care furnish the glut

ton's table with daily excess, who will not give the remaining scraps to God's children? If there be divine providence in this, what is become of the divine equity? This inequality of affairs seems to persuade, that it is not the holy and righteous God of heaven, but rather the god of this world, who govern the concerns of it; and that he spoke truth, when he told our Saviour, Luke iv. 6, the power and glory of this world is 'delivered unto me, and to whomsoever I will give it.' " I answer,

1. *This quarrel is not only, of late, commenced against heaven; but it hath been the complaint of all ages.*

It raised controversies among the very heathen themselves; some of them upon this ground denying, and others again by whole treatises defending, the government of the world by providence. And no wonder it should puzzle them, since the very best of God's saints and servants have likewise stumbled at this stone of offense: thus, the Psalmist, Ps. lxxiii. 2, 3, "As for me, my feet were almost gone; my steps had well nigh slipped. For I was envious at the foolish, when I saw the prosperity of the wicked:" so, likewise, the prophet Jeremiah, xii. 1, "Righteous art thou, oh Lord, when I plead with thee; yet let me talk with thee of thy judgments. Wherefore doth the way of the wicked prosper? Wherefore are all they happy, that deal very treacherously?" This, therefore, is an old grief; which, in all ages of the world, hath been complained of. And, though at first sight it seems to confute the providence of God, yet, if we more narrowly consider it, it is a strong confirmation of it: for, since virtue and goodness are so despicable a thing in the world, since holy and good men have been always injured and persecuted, certainly were there not an all-wise providence, that finds out ways and means of its own to counterpoise these disadvantages, and to preserve them amidst the rage and hatred of their implacable enemies, long ere this there had been none of them left, either to have suffered or complained. Were there no other argument to prove that God governs the world, this would suffice, even, that his servants have been continually oppressed in it, yet never could be rooted out of it: though men and devils have combined together against them, and God (as they have complained) hath seemed to abandon them; yet such a defenseless and forlorn generation as this, hath been hitherto and shall still be preserved to the very end of the world: doth not this speak forth the power and care of Almighty God, thus to keep a bush unconsumed, in the midst of fire? to preserve fuel untouched, in the very embraces of flames?

2. *God doth chastise his own people and prosper the wicked, that he might thereby rectify our judgments; and teach us not to account adversity the greatest evil, nor yet prosperity the chief good.*

For, certainly, were they so, only the righteous should enjoy the grandeur, pomp, and glory of this world; and only the wicked and ungodly become miserable. Concerning this, St. Austin speaks excellently, in his LXXth Epistle: "Worldly things," saith he, "are, in themselves, but indifferent; and good and evil, only as they are improved: but, lest they should be thought always evil, therefore God sometimes gives them to those who are good; and, lest they should be thought the highest and the chief good, they are sometimes given to those who are evil. There is no such way, to traduce the riches, the honors, the pleasures of this life; those vain nothings, which are so earnestly desired and eagerly pursued by the most; no such way to beat down their price in the esteem of all wise and good men, as for God to bestow those upon the vilest, which he sometimes denies to the best and holiest.

3. *When God bestows any temporal good thing upon wicked and ungodly men, he gives it as their portion: and, when he brings any calamity on his own children, he inflicts it for their trial.*

Is it not ordinary, that a servant receives more for wages, than a son may have for the present at his own command? God is the Father and bountiful maintainer of the whole family, both in heaven and earth; a Father to the faithful, a Lord and Master over all: he may give his slaves large wages, when his own children possibly have not so much in hand. Is he therefore hard or unjust? No: the inheritance is theirs, and that is kept in reversion for them. What wicked men possess of this world, is all that ever they can hope for: why should we grudge them filled bags, or swelling titles! it is their whole portion: they now receive their good things: hast thou food and clothing? That is children's fare: envy not ungodly men, who shine amid the gaieties of the world: they have more than you; but it is all they are like to have: the Psalmist gives us an account of their estate, Ps. xvii. 14. They are the "men of the world, who have their portion in this life, and whose bellies" God filleth "with" his "hid treasure." Whereas thou, oh Christian, who possessest nothing, art heir-apparent of heaven, joint heir with Jesus Christ who is the heir of all things, and hast an infinite mass of riches laid up for thee; so great and infinite, that all the stars of heaven are too few to account it by: you have no reason to complain of being kept short, for all, that God hath, is yours: whether prosperity or adversity,

life or death, all is yours. What God gives, is for your comfort: what he denies or takes away, is for your trial: it is for the increase of those graces, which are far more gracious than any temporal enjoyment. If, by seeing wicked and ungodly men roll in wealth and ease, when thou art forced to struggle against the inconveniences and difficulties of a poor estate, thou hast learnt a holy contempt and disdain of the world, believe it, God hath herein given thee more, than if he had given thee the world itself.

4. *God doth, many times, even in this world, expound the mystery of his providence, by the fatal and dreadful overthrow of those wicked men, whom he, for a while, suffered to prosper.*

"The triumphing of the wicked is short:" Job xx. 5. At longest, it is but short; because measured out by a short life: now, is their triumph; hereafter, their torment. But, many times, God brings them to ruin, even in this life: he turns the wheel of providence, and makes it pass over those, who, but a while before, sat proudly on the top of it. And then wilt thou doubt, whether God governs the world by providence? Wilt thou doubt, whether God be just, in suffering wicked men to prosper and flourish? God lifts them up on high, only that he may cast them down with the more terrible fall. "When all the workers of iniquity" prosper, saith the Psalmist, Ps. xcii. 7: "it is that they may be destroyed forever." Now when God comes thus to execute judgment upon them, those, who questioned the providence of God in their advancement, will the more glorify it in their downfall: "The righteous shall rejoice when he seeth the vengeance; and shall say, Verily, there is a reward for the righteous: verily there is a God, that judgeth in the earth:" Ps. lviii. 11.

5. *If God doth not clear up this inequality of his providence, in this life, yet he will certainly do it at the day of judgment.*

And, indeed, the strange dispensation of affairs in this world is an argument, which doth convincingly prove, that there shall be such a day, wherein all the entanglements of providence shall be clearly unfolded. Then, shall the riddle be dissolved, why God hath given this and that profane wretch so much wealth, and so much power to do mischief: is it not, "that they shall be destroyed forever?" Ps. xcii. 7. Then shall they be called to a strict account, for all that plenty and prosperity, for which they are now envied; and the more they have abused, the more dreadful will their condemnation be. Then, it will appear that God gave them not as mercies, but as snares. It is said, Ps. xi. 6, that God will "rain on the wicked snares, fire and brimstone, and a horrible tempest:"

when he scatters abroad the desirable things of this world, riches, honors, pleasures, &c., then he rains "snares" upon them; and, when he shall call them to an account for these things, then he will rain upon them "fire and brimstone, and a horrible tempest" of his wrath and fury. Dives, who reveled in luxury on earth; yet, in hell, could not obtain so much as one poor drop of water, to cool his scorched and flaming tongue: had not his excess and intemperance been so great in his life, his fiery thirst had not been so tormenting after death: and, therefore, in that sad item that Abraham gives him, Luke xvi. 25, he bids him "remember, that thou, in thy lifetime, receivedst thy good things, and likewise Lazarus evil things: but now he is comforted, and thou art tormented." I look upon this as a most bitter and a most deserved sarcasm; upbraiding him for his gross folly, in making the trifles of this life his good things: "thou hast received thy good things, but now thou art tormented." Oh, never call Dives' purple and delicious fare "good things," if they thus end in torments! Was it good for him to be wrapt in purple, who is now wrapt in flames? Was it good for him to fare deliciously, who was only thereby fattened against the day of slaughter? Could you lay your ears to hell's gates, you might hear many of the grandees and potentates, the great and rich ones of this world, cursing all their pomp and bravery; and wishing that they had been the most despicable of all those, whom they once hated, oppressed, and injured. And, as it will appear at that day, that none of the enjoyments of this world are good to wicked men; so will it appear, that none of those afflictions and calamities, which good men suffer, are evil: Lazarus's sores are not evil, since now every sore is turned into a star: his lying prostrate at the rich miser's door is not evil, since now he lies in Abraham's bosom. And, at this day, all these intricacies of providence will be made plain; and we shall have other apprehensions of things, than what we have at present: now we call prosperity, riches, and abundance, "good things;" and want and affliction, "evil;" but, when we come to consider these with relation to eternity, the true standard to measure them by, then poverty may be a mercy, and riches a judgment: God may bless one by afflictions, and curse another by prosperity; he may bestow more upon us in suffering us to want, than if he should give us the store and treasures of all the earth. And, certainly, whatever our thoughts of it are now, yet within awhile this will be the judgment of us all; when we are once lodged in our eternal state, then we shall acknowledge that nothing in this world deserved the name

of good, but as it promoted our eternal happiness ; nor of evil, but as it tended to eternal misery.

And thus you see this grand objection answered ; and the providence of God cleared from that injustice, which we are apt peevishly to impute unto it. Other doubts are of less moment, and therefore shall be more briefly resolved.

ii. "IF GOD'S PROVIDENCE ORDAINS ALL THINGS TO COME TO PASS ACCORDING TO THE IMMUTABLE LAW OF HIS PURPOSE, THEN WHAT NECESSITY IS THERE FOR PRAYER? We cannot, by our most fervent prayers, alter the least circumstance or punctilio in God's decrees. If he hath so laid the method of his providence in his own counsels, as to prepare mercies and blessings for us, our prayers cannot hasten nor ripen them before their time : or, if he determine, by his providence, to bring afflictions upon us, our prayers cannot prevent nor prolong the time fixed for their coming."

Now to this Aquinas answers well, that the Divine providence doth not only ordain what effects shall come to pass, but also by what means and causes, and in what order they shall flow. God hath appointed, as the effect itself, so the means to accomplish it.

Now prayer is a means to bring to pass that, which God hath determined shall be. We do not pray, out of hope to alter God's eternal purposes ; but we pray, to obtain that, which God hath ordained to be obtained by our prayers : we ask, that thereby we may be fit to receive, what God hath from all eternity determined to give by prayer, and not otherwise. And, therefore, when we lie under any affliction, if we languish under pain or sickness, if we are pinched by want or poverty, if we are oppressed by the injuries and persecutions of others, prayer is necessary ; because, as God by his providence hath brought these things upon us, so likewise possibly the same providence hath determined not to remove them, till we earnestly and fervently pray for our deliverance from them. And, therefore, when God hath promised great mercies to the Jews, he tells them by the Prophet Ezek. xxxvi. 37 : "I will yet for this be inquired of by the house of Israel to do it for them." Prayer, therefore, doth not incline God to bestow that, which before he was not resolved to give : but it capacitates us to receive that, which God will not give otherwise.

iii. Another objection may be this: "IF PROVIDENCE ORDERETH AND DISPOSETH ALL THE OCCURRENCES OF THE WORLD, THEN THERE CAN NOTHING FALL OUT CASUALLY AND CONTINGENTLY."

I answer: In respect of God it is true, there is nothing casual nor contingent in the world. A thing may be casual, in respect of particular causes; but, in respect of the universal and first cause, nothing is such. If a master should send a servant to a certain place, and command him to stay there till such a time, and presently after should send another servant to the same, the meeting of these two is wholly casual in respect of themselves, but ordained and foreseen by the master that sent them. So is it, in all fortuitous events here below. They fall out unexpectedly, as to us; but not so, as to God: he foresees and he appoints all the vicissitudes of things, and all the surprisings of human accidents. So that, you see, there may be contingencies in the world, though God's providence be most particular and punctual.

iv. Some may object, that this "WOULD DESTROY THE LIBERTY OF MAN'S WILL; AND SUBJECT ALL THINGS TO A FATAL NECESSITY, EVEN HUMAN ACTIONS THEMSELVES: for, if man can do nothing, but what God hath by his providence appointed shall be done, how then is man free, either to do or not to do?"

This question requires much more time to answer it, at large, than I can allow it.

Some, seeing it a very difficult thing to *reconcile* providence and liberty, have presumed to deny that providence intermeddles at all in such affairs as depend upon the free will of man. And, of this opinion, Tully seems to have been: for which St. Austin chas-
 iseth him as injurious to God; when he saith, "*Voluntatem dum
 acerat liberam, fecit sacrilegam.*"

I shall not here stand to distinguish between a necessity of coaction, and a necessity of infallibility; and that the providence of God doth not bring upon the will a necessity of coaction, but only of infallibility, which very well consists with the liberty of the will.

All, that I shall at present answer, is, that God doth indeed efficaciously determine the will to do what it doth: yet this determination leaves it in a perfect state of liberty; because the liberty of the will doth not so much consist in indifference to act or not to act, as in a rational spontaneity. When we do what we have an appetite to do upon grounds that to us seem rational, then we act freely. Now, though God doth absolutely sway the will which

way he pleaseth, yet he never forceth it contrary to its own inclinations: for that, to which God determines it by his providence, seems, at that present, most rational to be done; and, upon that representation of good in the object, the will embraces it, and acts accordingly. So that its freedom is not violated by any boisterous and compulsive sway, which the first cause hath over it; but God attracts it with such a powerful and insinuating sweetness, that, though the will can incline to nothing but what it seems to have reason for, yet withal it wills nothing but that unto which God by providence overrules it. So Austin, *De Civitate Dei*, lib. v. cap. 9: *Nos dicimus et Deum scire omnia antequam fiant, et voluntate nos facere quicquid à nobis non nisi volentibus fieri sentimus et novimus*: "Though God foresees and decrees all things before they are, yet we do that with a free will, which we do not otherwise than willingly."

v. The last doubt and query is this: "IF GOD GOVERN ALL ACTIONS AND ALL AFFAIRS, BY AN EXACT AND CRITICAL PROVIDENCE; HOW THEN COMES IT TO PASS, THAT THERE IS SO MUCH EVIL, VILLANY, AND WICKEDNESS COMMITTED IN IT?"

The discussion of this is the more obscure and intricate, because it is hard to conceive how God, who is infinite goodness itself, should interest his providence in what is so contrary to his nature.

Now, here, we must affirm, that there is no evil whatsoever, whether it be of sin or of suffering, that comes to pass without the providence of God. As for the evil of punishment or suffering, it is clear, Amos iii. 6, "Shall there be evil in a city, and the Lord hath not done it?" But, for the evil of sin, it is not effectively from God; yet doth he, by his providence, for most holy and wise ends, permit wicked men to commit those sins, which his law prohibits, and his nature abhors. Though they refuse to be subject to the written law, yet they are and must be subject to the eternal law of his own counsels: and there is not a sin which they commit, but, as his authority condemns and his purity hates it; so, his wisdom both suffers it to be, and overrules it when it is to his own ends. It is true, all men naturally are slaves to their lusts, but God holds their chain in his own hands: sometimes, slackening it, by his permission; and, sometimes, straitening it, by his powerful restraint. And, therefore, to plead providence as the warrant of our actions (a boisterous argument which, of late, hath been most used amongst us, until Providence

itself had signally confuted it) is to plead that for the justification of our actions, without which they could not be sinful: thus Cain killed his brother, by a providence; and Achan stole the wedge of gold, and Judas betrayed Christ, and the Jews crucified him, by a providence; yea, and all the villany, that was ever acted under the sun, was all brought forth out of the cursed womb of men's lusts, by the providence of God, that is, by his permission of the evil, and concurrence as to the act. Neither is this any stain at all upon the infinite holiness and purity of his nature: for, though we sin, if we hinder not the commission of sin in others when it is in our power to do it, because we are commanded and obliged to it, both by the care we ought to have of his honor, and the charity we owe unto the souls of others; yet no such obligation lies upon God, who may justly give men over to their perverted inclinations: and, though he can easily keep the most wicked man in the world, from rushing into those sins which he daily commits; yet, not being bound to interpose his power to hinder them, he permits them holily, and at last will punish them justly.

But, the question is not so much whether God doth not by his providence permit sin, as why he doth it: And St. Austin answers it excellently, in that known saying of his: "God," saith he, "who is infinitely good, would never permit evil, were he not so infinitely wise, and knew how to bring good out of evil." It is the primary object of his hatred; and that alone for which he hates wicked men. As he is a holy God, so he hates it; and, as he is a wise God, so he permits it.

And there is a twofold good, for which God doth sometimes permit evil.

1. God, by permitting sin, *manifests the glory of many of his attributes.*

"Surely the wrath of man shall praise thee;" saith the Psalmist, lxxvi. 10. Every sin strikes at some of the Divine attributes; it denies his justice; another, his mercy: one, his power; another, his wisdom: and all are contrary to his purity. But yet God hath, in his own counsels, such secret springs and wires, whereby he doth so wreath and invert these sins, that eventually they advance what they seem directly to oppose. A child perhaps would think, when he sees a husbandman cast dung and soil upon his field, that it were but improvidently done thus to spoil the flourishing verdure and gaiety of the grass and flowers: why that very dung, which covers them, makes them afterwards sprout up more fair and fresh. So God permits wicked men to dung the

earth with their filth, that those attributes of his, which seem to be buried under them, may afterwards spring up with the greater luster and glory: from hence he will reap the richer harvest of praise to himself. Sometimes, he glorifies the severity of his justice, by hardening them in their sins to their own destruction; sometimes, the riches of his mercy, by calling the greatest and most flagitious sinners to repentance, and granting them pardon; and, always, his infinite patience and forbearance, in not executing present vengeance upon those, who so daringly provoke him. But, although we cannot now so clearly comprehend the advantages, which God makes out of the sins of men: yet, when we come to stand in the general assembly at the day of judgment, God will then comment upon and explain the mysteries of his providence; and make us understand how those sins, for which he will then condemn the world, put a polish and glory upon his attributes.

2. God, by permitting sin, *exerciseth the graces of his people.*

The sins of others give us matter for the exercise of a holy zeal for God, who is daily affronted by them; of a holy pity and commiseration over those, who, like madmen, wound and gash and destroy themselves; and for the exercise of a holy caution over ourselves, lest we be induced to sin after their example. Our own sins give us daily occasion to renew our repentance, to humble our souls before God, to fortify our resolutions, to double the guards we set upon our own hearts and ways, and to watch over ourselves more circumspectly that we relapse not into the commission of them again. Thus, a true Christian may gain some advantage by his very falls: as husbandmen make use of the very thorns and briars which grow in their fields, to stop the gaps and strengthen the fences about them; so we should improve our very sins and failings, to fence our souls, that we lie not open to the like temptations for the future.

IV. I shall conclude with two or three INFERENCES.

i. If the accurateness of God's providence reach unto all the little concerns of the world, we may be well assured, **THAT THOSE, WHICH ARE THE MORE CONSIDERABLE AND IMPORTANT OCCURRENCES OF IT, ARE ALL GUIDED AND GOVERNED BY A SPECIAL HAND OF PROVIDENCE.**

And thus, our Saviour himself urgeth, as a strong encouragement for our confidence and trust in God: not a sparrow falls to

the ground "without your Father; fear ye not therefore: ye are of more value than many sparrows:" yea, not a hair of your head falls without a providence, and think ye that the head itself shall? Certainly, God doth not, like Domitian, busy himself about flies, and neglect the great and weighty affairs of his government. And this is the reason of that question, which the Apostle asks, 1 Cor. ix. 9, "Doth God take care for oxen?" yes, certainly he doth; nor did the Apostle intend to deny it, but thereby to infer that certainly his care is much more particular towards us. This, then, may establish our hearts under any personal sufferings, or public calamities; when evil is upon ourselves, or the nation; when uproars and confusions seem to reduce the world back to its ancient chaos; when storms and waves overwhelm the ship, and we, with the disciples, think our God asleep, and begin to cry out, with the Psalmist, "Awake, oh Lord, why sleepest thou?" Ps. xliv. 33. Our God is not sleeping, but even then at the helm: he steers, he governs and guides all these disorders; and will conduct the whole tumult and hurry of affairs to his own glory and our good.

ii. If God's providence hath the command and sway even over the sins of men, this then may be ABUNDANT MATTER OF PEACE AND SATISFACTION, IN THE WORST OF TIMES, WHEN WICKEDNESS DOTH MOST OF ALL RAGE AND ABOUND.

Let us then consider, that, if God permits them, he also can, when he pleaseth, check and put a stop and period to their rage and madness. Their hands are fettered by the adamant chains of a most strong decree, which they can neither reverse nor exceed: whatsoever they do, is but by permission; a limited, and a limiting permission. Our Saviour tells Pilate, "Thou couldst have no power over me, except it were given thee from above:" John xix. 10. The very power, that men have to sin against God, is from God; and therefore, certainly, he will withdraw it, when it doth not work out his own ends. This was it, that satisfied David, when Shimei pelted him with stones and curses: 2 Sam. xvi. 10. Let him alone: "let him curse; because the Lord hath said unto him, Curse David."

iii. Hence see TO WHAT WE OUGHT TO ASCRIBE IT, THAT HERE IS NO MORE NOTORIOUS WICKEDNESS COMMITTED IN THE WORLD.

When we hear of any prodigious villainy, we are apt to wonder,

that ever such abominations should be incident to the sons of men. Wonder not at the matter, as if any strange thing were happened to them; but rather wonder at the goodness of God, which is the sole cause that such things as these are wonders. Were his permissive providence as large, as men's lusts are outrageous, these things would soon cease to be wonders, and become the common and ordinary practice of all men. Why are not our streets continually filled with violence, rapine, murders, and outcries? Whence is it, that we enjoy our possessions and our lives in safety? The wickedness of men lies hard and presses upon God's restraints; and, wheresoever there are any gaps in it, it breaks forth naturally and violently; and, if this dam and bank of divine providence were but broken down, it would break out till it had overflowed the whole face of the earth, and covered it with a deluge of impiety and profaneness: but that God, who sets bound to the raging of the sea, and saith, Hitherto shall thy proud waves come and no farther, doth, by the same almighty providence, set bounds to the lusts and corruptions of men, which are altogether as unruly; and curbs in the fury of their madness, which else would drown the whole world in perdition and destruction.

iv. This should teach us TO ACQUIESCE AND REST SATISFIED IN EVERY PROVIDENCE OF GOD, AS THAT, WHICH WILL CERTAINLY, IN THE END, REDOUND TO HIS OWN GLORY.

When we see disorders and confusions abroad in the world, we are apt to despond and to cry out, "Lord, what wilt thou do for thy great name? Thy honor, thy glory lies bleeding, and suffers through the sins of men." Commit thy care to God. He will certainly so wield their lusts, as that they shall bring about and effect his own ends. God is glorifying himself, even by these things; and why then should we be troubled? This thought, kept alive on our hearts, would cause us to rest satisfied amidst all the tumults which we observe and hear of in the world: for, though we know not how to unwind these tangled dispensations to the bottom of his glory, yet he can and will. There is an invisible and wise hand, that moulds and fashions all: and, though the parts by themselves may appear rude and unpolished; yet, put the whole frame and series of providence together, and that will appear most admirable and glorious.

MISCELLANEOUS SERMONS.

III.

A SERMON ON THE OMNIPRESENCE OF GOD.

Whither shall I go from thy Spirit? Or whither shall I flee from thy presence? If I ascend up into heaven, thou art there: if I make my bed in hell, behold, thou art there. If I take the wings of the morning, and dwell in the uttermost parts of the sea; even there shall thy hand lead me, and thy right hand shall hold me. Ps. cxxxix. 7-10.

THESE words declare to us the glorious attribute of God's immensity or omnipresence, set forth in most elegant and lofty terms; as if the prophet would mitigate the dread which might well seize upon us, from the consideration of the terrible majesty of God being so near us, by the sweetness and flourishing of the expression, "Whither shall I go from thy Spirit?" This question doth not imply, that David was indeed contriving how to make an escape from God; nor pondering with himself in what forlorn corner of the world he might lie obscure, where the presence of God should never apprehend him: but this interrogation serveth for a vehement assertion: whither shall I go? That is, there is no place whither I can go, or where I can imagine to go, but thy Spirit and thy presence will be with me. "Whither shall I go from thy Spirit?" That is, either from thee, who art a spirit, and so canst pierce and penetrate me; be as truly and essentially in the very bowels and marrow of my soul, as my soul is intimately and essentially in my body: "from thy Spirit;" that is, from thy knowledge and thy power; thy knowledge to detect and observe me, thy power to behold or to crush me.

In what dark corner or cavern soever I should hide myself, yet thy presence is so universal, that it would find me out; for it stretcheth itself from heaven to hell: "If I make my bed in hell." "hell," here, may be meant the grave, which is often so called in Scripture; as Acts ii. 27, Ps. xvi. 10: "Thou wilt not leave my soul in hell, neither wilt thou suffer thy Holy One to see corruption;" (a prophecy concerning the resurrection of Christ from the grave:) that is, thou wilt not leave my person in the grave: so it is interpreted verse 31, when it is said, that "his soul was not left

in hell, neither did his flesh see corruption:" Gen xxxvii. 35. Jacob, speaking concerning the supposed death of his son Joseph, says, "I will go down into the grave unto my son mourning:" there, and Job xvii. 13, that word which we translate "the grave," we here translate "hell." "Now," saith the prophet, "though I should go down to the grave, and be covered from the sight, and forgotten out of the mind and thoughts of men; yet thou art there, and observest every particle of dust how it molders and crumbles away: my body cannot be more in the grave, than thou art there." If we take "hell" for the place of the damned, God's presence is there likewise: one would think, if from any place God would exclude himself, it should be from "hell," since his presence is sufficient to make a heaven anywhere; but, so infinite is his unlimited being, that when the body is in the grave and the soul in hell, yet then is God present, both with the soul and with the body; "If I make my bed in hell," that is, "If I cover myself never so close and draw the curtains of the thickest darkness round about me; if my body should lie in the deepest caverns of the earth, and my soul be wrapt about with a winding-sheet of smoke and flames; yet thou art there, and thy presence would soon find me out:" Job xxvi. 6. "Hell is naked before him, and destruction hath no covering:" yea, the Apostle tells us, 2 Thess. i. 9, that the wicked in hell, "shall be punished with everlasting destruction from the presence of the Lord, and from the glory of his power:" that is, not only that their punishment shall be to be separated from the presence of the Lord: but, look how they are said to be punished "from the glory of his power," so likewise are they to be punished "from his presence:" their destruction shall be "from the glory of his power:" that is, his power in inflicting most dreadful punishments upon them, and his power in sustaining them under those punishments, when with one hand the Lord shall hold them up in hell, and lift up the other as high as heaven to give them redoubled strokes of everlasting vengeance: so, likewise, they shall be punished "from the presence of the Lord:" that is, God himself will be present in hell to torment and punish them, that, at the very same time that he shall be a cherishing God in heaven, he will be a tormenting God in hell: because, in them, he hath established his two great thrones; the one of his mercy, the other of his justice.

But yet, possibly, there may be found some neglected place here below, where God hath no such concern to be present, as he hath to be present in heaven and in hell. Now, saith the Psalmist, vv. 9, 10, "If I take the wings of the morning, and dwell in the

uttermost parts of the sea; even there shall thy hand lead me, and thy right hand shall hold me." "Wings of the morning" is an elegant metaphor; and, by them, we may conjecture is meant the sunbeams: called "wings," because of their swift and speedy motion: making their passage so sudden and so instantaneous, as that they do prevent the observation of the eye; called "the wings of the morning," because the dawn of the morning comes flying in upon these wings of the sun, and brings light along with it; and, by beating and fanning these wings, scatters the darkness before it. "Now," saith the Psalmist, "if I could pluck these wings of the morning, the sunbeams; if I could plume my own shoulders with them; if I should fly as far and as swift as light, even in an instant, to "the uttermost parts of the sea;" yea, if in my flight I could spy out some solitary rock, so formidable and dismal as if we might almost call in question whether ever a providence had been there; if I could pitch there on the top of it, where never any thing had made its abode, but coldness, thunders, and tempests: yet there "shall thy hand lead me, and thy right hand shall hold me."

Thus you see the text declares this *ubiquity* and *omnipresence* of God, both in heaven and earth and hell, and in all places and in all things.

I shall, first, handle this point doctrinally; and, then, practically. Observing this method, I shall, (1) Lay down some positions. (2) Demonstrate the truth of them, by some cogent and convincing arguments. (3) Answer some objections, which may be made against the omnipresence of God. (4) Make some improvement of this point.

I. I am to lay down some POSITIONS.

POSITION I. GOD IS INTIMATELY AND ESSENTIALLY IN ALL PARTS AND PLACES OF THE WORLD.

Yea, this presence, being essential, is also necessary; so that it is simply impossible, that God should not be wheresoever the creature is. By the world, I mean whatsoever was at the beginning created by the power of God; the heavens, the air, the earth, and sea, and all things visible and invisible: God is with them and in them all.

There are three things briefly to be touched upon here.

1. That *God is intimately present with the creatures.*

He passeth through their very beings and inward parts; he is in the very center of their essence; and this flows from the spirituality of his essence. From hence it is, that it is impossible that he should be excluded out of the most close compacted being. Bodies cannot thus enter one another, because of their gross and material substances: they can only stand without, and knock for admission: they cannot enter into the substance one of another: water, when sucked up by a sponge, doth not pass into the substantial part of it; but only fills up those caverns and hollow pores, which were before filled with air: the air we breathe in cannot enter into the substance of our bodies; but only into those pores and hollow recesses, which are by nature fitted to receive it: so of all other corporeal beings. But spirits are not tied up to this law: the soul of man, because it is a spirit, resides not only in the empty void spaces of the body, but also in the midst of the most solid and substantial part of it: angels, who are a degree of spiritual beings above the soul, cannot be excluded from being present in the most condensed bodies; and we know not how often they are in us; we know not how often they pass through us, nor how many of them are now present with us: we read of no less than a legion, which is six thousand, that quartered themselves together in one possessed person, Mark v. 9; then, certainly God, between whom and the angels there is infinitely more distance than between angels and bodies, cannot possibly be shut out of any being, but diffuseth himself to every part of his creatures.

2. God is not only intimately present with his creatures, because as he is a spirit he passeth through the most inmost part of them, but *he is intimately present with all his creatures at once.*

And, therein, is his presence distinguished from the presence of angels. They, indeed, pass from one to another, and be one in another; they may, possibly, stretch and dilate themselves to a great compass; but they cannot stretch themselves to be everywhere present, to be in all beings at once: if an angel suddenly dart himself from one point of the heavens, through the center of the earth, to an opposite point of the heavens, and by a motion of insinuation, without impelling or driving the air before him, yet he is not in heaven and earth at once; but, when he is in one place, he ceaseth to be in another. But it is not so with God, for he is everywhere and in all things at once forever: therefore God asks us, "Do not I fill heaven and earth?" Jer. xxiii. 24: he is so in them, as that he doth not leave any one place void or empty of

himself; for, were there any place where God were not, then it could not be properly said to be filled with him.

3. *This omnipresence of God is simply necessary, not only for preserving and upholding his creatures in their beings and operations, but necessary to our very beings.*

For his own essence is simple; and he cannot withdraw from nor forsake any place or any thing, with which his presence now is. God cannot contract and lessen himself, nor gather up his essence into a narrow room and compass; but, as he is here in this very place which we now take up, so he must and will be here to all eternity. Nor is this any imperfection, as if God were not an infinite perfection and excellence; for this flows from the immutability of his nature and essence: for, should God remove himself, he were not altogether unchangeable; but, with him, there is neither change nor "shadow of turning:" James i. 17. What the heathen thought of this immensity and omnipresence of God is somewhat obscure. Some of them confined him to heaven; and were so far from affirming him present in all things, that they thought he took no care of any thing below, as being too mean and unworthy for God to regard: this was the opinion of the Epicureans, Acts xvii. 18: others thought, indeed, that the care and providence of God reached to these ordinary things, but not his essence; and the ground of their error was, because they thought it most befitting the majesty of God, to sit only in heaven, a glorious and a becoming place, and not to make himself so cheap and so common, as to be present with men and the vile things of the world; but this is a weak reason, as I shall show presently. Some others among the heathen had more correct apprehensions of this divine attribute: one of them, intending to give a description what God was, tells us most admirably, "God is a sphere, whose center is everywhere, and whose circumference is nowhere:" lofty apprehension of the divine nature in a heathen! Another, being demanded what God was, made answer, that "God is an infinite point:" than which nothing can be said more (almost) or truer, to declare this omnipresence of God. It is reported of Heraclitus the philosopher, when his friend came to visit him, being in an old rotten hovel, "Come in, come in," saith he, "for God is here;" God is in the meanest cottage, as well as in the noblest palace: the poorest beggar dwells with God, as well as the greatest princes; for God is everywhere present, and sees all things.

POSITION ii. GOD IS NOT ONLY PRESENT IN THE WORLD, BUT HE IS INFINITELY EXISTENT ALSO WITHOUT THE WORLD, AND BEYOND ALL THINGS BUT HIMSELF.

He is in all that vast tract of nothing, which we can imagine, and beyond the highest heavens. What reason can say for this, I shall presently show. In the mean time, see that one positive place of Scripture, 1 Kings viii. 27, "Behold, the heaven, and heaven of heavens, cannot contain thee:" and if God be not contained in them, certainly he then must be infinitely beyond and above them: he surmounts the heaven of heavens, that is, the very highest and uppermost heavens, which St. Paul calls the "third heaven:" 2 Cor. xii. 2: that glorious place, in which God doth most specially manifest himself, and will do to all eternity. The Scripture tells us, that, though the heaven of the glorified angels and saints be the place in which God will especially manifest his presence, yet it is not that place unto which God will or doth confine his presence: Isa. lxvi. 1, 2, "Thus saith the Lord, The heaven is my throne, and the earth is my footstool: where is the house that ye build unto me? and where is the place of my rest? For all those things hath mine hand made:" as if God should have said, "Do not think to cloister me up within the walls of the temple: no; I am set upon the highest heavens, as upon my throne; and they are all under me, and I am exalted far above them." Many such glorious expressions there are of God's infinity and immensity scattered up and down the Scripture, which I shall not now spend time to collect. The Scripture, you see, owns it for a truth, that God is infinite in his essence, beyond the whole world: which is one of those divine properties, the possibility of which is more than we can conceive; that since, beyond the world there is nothing, God should exist there. But, though reason cannot apprehend it, yet from reason, as well as from Scripture, it appears it must be so.

POSITION iii. AS GOD EXISTS EVERYWHERE, SO GOD UNDIVIDED EXISTS EVERYWHERE. So that all God is here, and all God is there, and all God is in every place and in every thing.

This is, indeed, a great and most inconceivable mystery: but yet it must needs be so; because God is indivisible and simple, and not compounded of parts: and, therefore, wherever there is any of God's essence, there is all his essence; otherwise, part of his essence would be here, and part there, and part of it elsewhere, which would be utterly repugnant to the simple and uncompounded

nature of God. God's attributes are his essence: now there is nowhere, where God is, but there are all his attributes; and, therefore, where God is, there is all his essence. He is a spirit, most wise, most powerful, most just, and the like; here, and there, as well as in heaven above. Yea, and what is more, to the astonishment of reason, than all this, God is everywhere omnipresent, and in every place. And, though it be common to all spiritual beings, because they have no parts, to have a totality in the whole and a totality in every part: (indeed it is expressed in the schools, that spirits are all in the whole, and all in every part;) yet, herein, God hath a peculiar way of subsisting from other spirits, that not only his essence alone is in every part of the world, but also his presence is in all and every part of the world; so that God is everywhere present: which is beyond the reach of our apprehensions; yet it is undoubtedly true, for God's omnipresence being that attribute which belongs to him, he is present everywhere and in all things.

II. Now for the rational DEMONSTRATIONS, whereby it may be evinced, that God is omnipresent.

1. That God is PRESENT EVERYWHERE IN THIS WORLD I shall make good by these arguments:

1. *From his unchangeableness.*

If there be any place where God is not, then God may be there, because he is omnipotent: but if God may be there, where he is not actually also, then it must be by motion to that place: but it is impossible that God should be able to move from one place to another, because he is immutable: therefore, hence it clearly follows, that there is no place, where God is not, and where he was not from all eternity.

2. It may be demonstrated, that God is omnipresent *from his preservation of all things in their beings.*

God is present with whatsoever he preserves: but he preserves every thing in its being: therefore he is present everywhere. There is required as great a power to preserve creatures from falling back into their first nothing, as there was to make them at first out of nothing; for preservation, as the philosopher speaks, is nothing else but a continued and prolonged creation: now he cannot create any thing at a distance from it, because no creature is fit to convey a creative action, and because also whatever virtue or power is in God it is his essence: therefore, if he create or preserve by his power, he creates and preserves immediately by

his essence, and so his essence must be wheresoever his operations are.

ii. But God exists not only in the world, but INFINITELY BEYOND THE WORLD ALSO. That may be demonstrated, from the infinity of his nature and essence; from the infinity of his perfections; from his Almighty power; and from his eternity.

1. *From the infinity of God's nature or essence.*

That nature, which is infinite, cannot be bounded or limited: but God's nature is infinite: therefore, it cannot be bounded. But if God were only present in the world, and did not exist infinitely beyond it, then his being and nature could not be infinite as a spirit is infinite: therefore, if God should be included in the world, he would also be but finite as the world.

2. *From the infinity of his perfections,* we may argue thus:

That, which is infinitely perfect, must be infinitely great: but God is infinitely perfect; so that there is no perfection, which we can imagine, but is eminently in God: therefore he must be infinitely great; so as there can be no space which we can imagine, but he must be present in it. But we can imagine an infinite space beyond this world: therefore God is there; because there is no perfection imaginable, which God hath not. Whatever is infinitely perfect, must be infinitely great; as appears from this, because the greater a thing is, the more perfect it is of that same kind, as a great piece of gold is more excellent than a less: and, therefore, from this perfection of God, it appears, that he is everywhere, he being all perfection.

3. As it is demonstrated from God's infinity and perfection, so likewise *from his almighty power.*

God can create another world greater than this, even in that imaginary space, which we can conceive beyond this world: therefore, certainly, God is now existent there.

4. God's omnipresence may be argued *from the eternity of God.*

God was infinitely existent before the creation of the world; since he is eternal, and the world but temporal: the world hath stood only but some few thousands of years, and before the creation of the world there was nothing but God, and God existed eternally in himself: therefore, though beyond this world there be nothing, yet God will be there actually existing in that same imaginary space beyond this world, as he did exist in an imaginary space before this world was created.

III. Let us now proceed to consider and remove some OBJECTIONS to the idea of that stupendous attribute of God's omnipresence.

OBJECT. i. The first is taken from those Scriptures, where it seems to be implied, that God moves from place to place: as in Gen. xviii. 21, where the Lord saith, concerning Sodom and Gomorrah, "I will go down now, and see whether they have done altogether according to the cry of it, which is come unto me:" and, in Hab. iii. 3, it is said, "God came from Teman, and the Holy One from Mount Paran."

"Now these places, which speak of going to and departing from places, seem to oppose God's ubiquity; because motion is inconsistent with God's omnipresence."

I answer: These and the like Scriptures are not to be taken properly and literally; but as accommodated to our capacity and conception: even as parents, when they speak to their little children, will sometimes lisp and babble in their language; so God oftentimes condescends to us in speaking our language, for the declaring of those things which are far above our reach. But you will say, "How are such places to be understood?" I answer: When God is said to come unto or to depart from any place or person, nothing else must be understood thereby, but declaring or not declaring himself to be present. As men, when they manifest themselves present, do it by moving hither or thither: so God, to accommodate himself thereunto, when he manifests his presence anywhere, tells us, that he goes thither; and, when that manifestation ceaseth, he tells us he departs thence; though he was always there present, both before and after that manifestation. So that these expressions used in the Scripture, concerning God, though spoken after the manner of men, yet must be understood after the manner of God, that is, with a suitableness and conformity to his infinite presence.

OBJECT. ii. "The Scripture tells us, that hereafter in heaven 'we all see Him as he is:' but is not that impossible? If God be omnipresent God, we shall not be able to comprehend him, because we shall not ourselves be infinite in heaven; and, if man be all finite, how then can he comprehend what is infinite; since infinite is comprehended by nothing, but that which is infinite?"

I answer: Such Scriptures are not to be understood, as if the capacities of angels, much less of men, are or ever shall be wide and capacious enough to contain the infinite greatness of God: no; his omnipresence is not comprehended by angels themselves, nor shall be by man forever. But they must be understood comparatively: our vision and sight of God, here, is but through a glass darkly; but, in heaven, it shall be with so much more brightness and clearness, that, in comparison with the obscure and glimmering way where by we know God here, it may be called seeing him face to face, and knowing him as we are known by him; though, to speak in absolute propriety of speech, these things are not possible to any creature.

OBJECT. iii. "It may seem no small disparagement to God to be everywhere present. What! for the glorious majesty of God to be present in such vile and filthy places, as are here upon earth?" To this I answer,

1. *God doth not think it any disparagement to him, nor think it unworthy of him, to know and make all these, which we call vile and filthy places: why then should we think it unworthy of him to be present there?*

2. *God is a Spirit, and is not capable of any pollution or defilement from any vile or filthy things.* The sunbeams are no more tainted by shining on a dunghill, than they are by shining on a bed of spices: no more can God be sullied by being present in foul dungeons where his servants have been cast, than to be in the glorious heavens; because he is a spirit, and his essence is not subject to any taints from the creature.

3. *The vilest things, that are, have still a being, that is good in their own kind; and as well-pleasing to God, as those things, upon which we put a greater value and esteem.*

4. *It reflects no more dishonor upon God, to be present with the vilest creatures, than to be present with the noblest and highest; because the angels are at an infinite distance from God. There is a greater disproportion between God and the angels, than there is between the vilest worm and an angel: all are at an infinite distance from his glory and majesty.*

IV. APPLICATION.

USE i. Is God thus infinitely present everywhere, and thus in

and with all his creatures? then WHAT AN ENCOURAGEMENT IS HERE UNTO PRAYER!

Thou canst not say, "Alas! I now pray; but how shall God hear? He is in heaven above, and I am on earth below, many thousands of miles distant from his presence: how then shall my weak whisperings, that can scarce reach the walls of mine own closet, ever be able to reach his ear?" No, God's essential presence is with thee, wheresoever thou art, as he is in heaven itself; and God is all ear: he can understand the silent motions of thy lips everywhere: yea, he can understand the secret motions of thy heart. When Hannah prayed for her son Samuel, Eli, the priest of God, thought her gesture did proceed from a distempered head, and not from a holy heart: but God was present with her lips; and that prayer, which was thought by the priest of God to be but a dumb show, yet to God himself was powerful rhetoric and as loud as thunder in his ears. The Scripture generally intimates, that all our prayers shall be directed to God in heaven: so Solomon prayed, 1 Kings viii. 32; "Then hear thou in heaven," &c.: and it is again expressed, in the 30th verse: so, that most excellent prayer, which Christ taught his disciples, in the beginning of it, "Our Father, which art in heaven," gives our thoughts a lift to heaven.

Now, this doth not imply, that God doth nowhere hear our prayers, but only in heaven.

But how, then? Why is this phrase used? For these two reasons:

1. *Because heaven is the most glorious place:* there God, especially, hath established his throne of grace, and sits upon it.

Now, because it is most glorious and majestic, and since God is there to hear the suits which are brought, and to receive the petitions which are made by all his servants here on earth, therefore the Scripture directeth us to that most glorious and celestial place: "Hear thou in heaven." Hence we have that expression, Acts x. 4, "Thy prayers and thine alms are come up for a memorial before God." Certainly, if our prayers should not be heard till they come to heaven, they are so weak and faint, that they would be out of breath by the way, and not be able then to speak for themselves. But, God speaks in us by his Spirit, and keeps alive the sense of his majesty upon our hearts, that he would not have us think it to be a mean and trivial thing to have our prayers heard: therefore he represents himself to us arrayed in all his glory.

2. Our prayers are directed to God in heaven, *because, though he hears them wherever they be uttered; yet he nowhere hears them with acceptance, but in heaven only.*

Our prayers are accepted by God, because they are heard in heaven. Thy prayers are not accepted by God, because God hears them upon earth; as they are heard in thy closet, or as they are heard in thy heart; but only as they are heard in heaven: and the reason is, because prayers are acceptable, only as they are presented before God in the mediation and intercession of Jesus Christ: he must mingle them with the incense of his merits, before they can ascend before God as a sweet savor. Now Christ performs his mediatorial office nowhere but in heaven: for though, as God, he is everywhere present, as the Father is, and therefore hears your prayers wheresoever they be put up; yet, as Mediator, they are only heard in heaven by him; and he hears no prayers, but the prayers of his people, as he is Mediator: and, therefore, it is no comfort to you, that Christ hears your prayers, as he is God only, for so he doth and cannot but do it; unless he hears your prayers, likewise, as he is Mediator. Now Christ, as he is Mediator, is God-man; for, as he wrought out our salvation in both natures, so he still continues to mediate for us in both natures: and, since the human nature is only in heaven, therefore it follows, he performs the mediatorial office only in heaven. Now it is the mediatorship of Christ alone, that makes all our prayers and duties acceptable to God himself: therefore it concerns us still to pray, "Lord, hear us in heaven. It is in vain, that thou hearest me on earth, unless thou hearest in heaven too. My prayers cannot be heard acceptably, unless thou hearest them twice. Thou hearest my prayers on earth; not a word of my tongue but thou hearest: but what will it avail thy servant, unless thou hearest my prayers a second time repeated over to thee in the intercession and mediation of Jesus Christ in heaven?" And therefore, saith Solomon, 1 Kings viii. 34, "Hear thou in heaven, and forgive:" when God shall only hear on earth, he will be so far from forgiving, that he will be avenged; but, when he hears our prayers in heaven, through the mediation of Christ, then he is inclined to forgive and pardon us. Hence we find, that the Jews prayed towards the temple, which was a type of heaven; and the altar and incense and mercy-seat in this temple were types of Christ, who is now in heaven: and therefore Daniel, when in Babylon, prayed, his window being open towards Jerusalem, towards the temple; as if no prayer were acceptable to God, but what was heard in heaven. So Jonah,

when he was in the belly of the whale, prayed to God. Afterwards when recounting his experience in that horrid place, he says, "My prayers came in unto thee, into thine holy temple." Jonah ii. 7. That is, God heard him in heaven: and, therefore, though the breath of Jonah could have no sweetness, yet the prayer that he breathed forth came up as incense and a sweet perfume before God as it came into the holy temple. Thus God hears the prayers of his people in heaven; but the prayers of the wicked he hears only upon earth: he hears them when they speak them, but God never hears their prayers in the mediation of Christ; but the prayers of his own people he hears on earth as he is an omnipresent and omnipotent God, and he hears them in heaven as he is a gracious and reconciled Father. If thou dost but whisper thy prayer, God will hear it: that, which is but whispered on earth, rings and echoes in the court of heaven; and, if Christ speaks your prayers over to God, they become so loud, that God cannot stop his ears against them. The voice of prayer is not like other voices: the further they reach, the weaker they grow: no; that voice, which is so weak that it cannot be heard beyond the compass of thy closet, yet when it is put forth in prayer, fills all heaven with its sound.

"But where is the encouragement unto prayer in all this?" If thou dost belong to God, thou mayst have great encouragement to prayer from the consideration of his omnipresence: for, because of this, there is no prayer of a child of God but shall be heard in heaven though it be uttered in secret. For consider, that though Christ, as man, is only in heaven; yet Christ, as God, is everywhere present, and hears the prayers of all men in the world. Those, who are wicked, he regards no further; but gives them the hearing: but, for his own, he regards their prayers, and presents what he hears from them to God in heaven. Christ makes his omniscience and omnipresence to be subservient to the work of his mediatorship. One of his offices is, to be a faithful High-Priest and an Advocate with God the Father for us; and Christ, being such an advocate as hears all the suits and all the causes of his clients, we may be assured, that there is not one prayer, which God hears on earth from us, but he hears it also in heaven, through Christ.

How keen the satire of Elijah upon the conduct of Baal's priests! Kings xviii. 27: "Cry aloud; for he is a god.... peradventure he will hear and must be awaked:" as if he should say, "You serve an unworthy God, that cannot hear those, who pray unto him!"

And, indeed, how should he do so, that is not omnipresent? "He is talking, or he is pursuing," or traveling; Cry! "Cry aloud!" and, peradventure, if he sleepeth, that will awaken him. But, though you should cry never so loud, though your cry should reach from earth to heaven, he would be silent: such a god as yours could never hear." And, therefore, when Elijah himself came to pray, v. 36, the text doth not tell us he cried aloud, but that he came near; but, when Baal's priests roared and howled, like distracted men, and cut themselves in an idolatrous manner, Baal is not prevailed upon to hear them. Now, Elijah "came near:" that is, he came in a calm and sedate manner, and poured out his fervent prayer to God; as knowing, that that God, to whom he prayed, is present everywhere.

The voice in prayer is necessary, upon a threefold account:

(1) As it is that, which God requires should be employed in his service: for this is the great end why our tongues were given to us, that, by them, we might bless and serve God: James iii. 9.

(2) When, in private, it may be a help and means to raise up our own affections and devotions, then the voice is requisite; keeping it still within the bounds of decency or privacy.

(3) In our joining also with others, it is a help likewise to raise and quicken their affections.

Otherwise, were it not for these three reasons, the voice is no more necessary to make known our wants to God, than it is to make them known to our own hearts; for God is always in us and with us, and knows what we have need of before we ask it.

USE ii. As the consideration of God's omnipresence should encourage us in prayer, as knowing that God certainly hears us; so it should AFFECT US WITH A HOLY AWE AND REVERENCE FOR GOD, in all our prayers and duties, and in the whole course of our lives and conversations.

Certainly, it is an excellent meditation, to prepare our hearts to duty, and to compose them in duty, to be much pondering the omnipresence of God: to think that I am with God: he is present in the room with me, even in the congregation with me, and likewise in my closet, and in all my converse and dealings in the world. How can it be possible for that man to be frothy and vain, who keeps this thought alive in his heart? If the presence of some earthly person strike an awe in our hearts when we come before them, how much more should the consideration of God's presence affect us with a holy fear! Suppose an angel should fly

in the midst of us, who are here present, with a rushing and dazzling glory, how would it make all our hearts beat and throb within us! It would make us soon abandon all those vain thoughts, upon which we now feed; those thoughts, which eat out the heart and life of duty. How much more should it affect us and fill us with holy fear, that that God is now and always in the midst of us, whose glory stains and sullies the beauty and extinguishes the light of angels! Oh! that God, who is always present with us, should be worshiped and served with a holy fear, and remembered with the greatest veneration.

Now, to imprint this the more deeply, I shall suggest two or three particulars.

1. *Because God is in all things, therefore he sees and knows all things.*

The omniscience of God is grounded upon his omnipresence: Jer. xxiii. 24: "Can any hide himself in secret places, that I shall not see him," saith the Lord. Do not I fill heaven and earth? saith the Lord." Nothing in heaven or earth can be hid or concealed from God's eye: Heb. iv. 13: "All things are naked and opened unto the eyes of him with whom we have to do." There is no corner so retired, so shady, so dark, no gulf so deep, that can hide any thing from the piercing discovery of his eye. He knows our thoughts, those nimble and those spiritual things, which are so quick in their flight that they cannot be seized upon by any creature in the world; God knows them: the devil cannot know them, nor can an angel know them; yet God discerns our thoughts more clearly than we can discern the faces of one another: he sees our "thoughts afar off," as the Psalmist tells us: he sees our thoughts in their first conception, when they first begin to heave in our breasts: he knows the least windings and turnings of our souls. Now would not this compose us to a habitual and holy awe of God, to be continually thinking, that, whatsoever we do, God's eye is now upon us? Let every one say within himself, "Wherever I am, or whatever I do, I am in the presence of the holy God, who takes notice of all my conduct: there is not a glance of mine eye, but his eye observes it: there is not an irreverent or unseemly gesture, but he takes notice of it: not a thought of mine can escape, but he knows that thought." Let this consideration season your lives and conversations: be still pondering in your minds, that, whatsoever you are doing, his eye is upon you, and he is present with you.

2. Consider, that *God not only sees into all you do, but he sees it to that very end that he may examine and search into it.*

He doth not only behold you with a common and indifferent look; but with a searching, watchful, and inquisitive eye: he pries into the reasons, the motives, the ends of all your actions, Ps. xi. 4, it is said, "The Lord's throne is in heaven: his eyes behold, his eyelids try, the children of men." Rev. i. 14, where Christ is described, it is said, "his eyes are as a flame of fire:" you know the property of fire is, to search and make trial of those things, which are exposed unto it, and to separate the dross from the pure metal: so, God's eye is like fire, to try and examine the actions of men; he knows and discerns how much your very purest duties have in them of mixture and base ends of formality, hypocrisy, distraction, and deadness: he sees through all your specious pretenses, that which you cast as a mist before the eyes of men, when yet thou art but a juggler in religion: all your tricks and sleights of outward profession, all those things that you use to cheat and delude men withal, cannot possibly impose upon him: he is a God, that can look through all those fig-leaves of outward profession, and discern the nakedness of your duties through them.

3. *God tries all your cases and actions, in order to an eternal judgment and sentence to be passed upon them.*

This consideration might damp the stoutest sinner's heart in the whole world. Believe it, oh sinner, God doth not only see your ways, but he sees them so as to remember them against you another day: though you have forgot what you have thought, and what you have spoken, and what you have done; yet God forever remembers it, and at that day he will sadly recall all these things again to your remembrance. Oh! that therefore this might prevail with you, so to do every thing, as being now already under the eye of God, and as shortly to be under his doom and sentence! If God should send an angel to stand at our backs, and tell us, whatever we are doing, this action of ours we must be judged for; it should make us as fearful of sinning, as that angel himself. True, we have no such monitor; but our conscience performs to us the same office: therefore, charge it upon your consciences, that they still put you in mind of God; that he sees you; that he will judge you; and that he always looks upon you, and writes down in those eternal leaves of his memorial-book, whatsoever proceeds from you, either in the duties of religion or in the actions of your ordinary course and conversation: therefore, because he is omnipresent and sees all things, stand in awe of his omniscience; whereby he sees whatsoever we do, and whereby he will try and judge us at the last day.

MISCELLANEOUS SERMONS.

IV.

A SERMON ON THE NATIVITY OF OUR LORD JESUS CHRIST.

PREACHED ON CHRISTMAS DAY.

And suddenly there was with the angel a multitude of the heavenly host, praising God, and saying, Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace, good-will towards men. LUKE ii. 13, 14.

IN this chapter we have a most wonderful history of the nativity of the Son of God: and it is described both by the mean entertainment that earth, and the glorious attendance that heaven afforded him.

His own appearance was but despicable, but the appearance of his retinue was most magnificent and astonishing: he, who was "the ancient of days," became a helpless infant: he, who was the light of the sun, comes into the world in the darkness of the night: he, who came that he might lay us in the bosom of the Father, is himself laid in the manger of a stable.

But, though he is meanly welcomed on earth, yet heaven makes abundant amends for all: a company of industrious shepherds, lying all night in the fields by their flocks, while they are watching their sheep, themselves find their own shepherd. Whilst they thought of no apparition, but of some ravenous beasts to devour their herd, an angel is winged away with so great swiftness, that he scatters light round about the place, and tells them of the birth of Christ: but then he bids them search for him in a strange place; telling them that they should find the Lord of Life and Glory in an inn: and a strange circumstance it is, that a holy angel should call the shameful debasement of the King of Heaven "tidings of great joy," and make it the matter of his jubilee, and triumph upon the delivery of his message. The text tells us, "there was with the angel a multitude of the heavenly host:" that is, of angels, those heavenly courtiers, leaving the glorious palace of heaven; as well they might, when their King lay here below: and then they second him with this joyful acclamation, "Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace, and good-will towards men."

In these words is contained whatsoever God or man can desire. What Jonathan, in the parable, speaks concerning the vine, Judges ix. 13, is certainly true of this text: It "cheereth God and man." God knoweth no higher design than his own glory; and Christ's coming into the world was for the accomplishment of that design. And man can desire no greater happiness than what follows, "Peace" and "good-will:" and both these are born into the world, together with Christ.

Now, by this "peace on earth," may be meant either mutually from men to men, that, upon Christ's birth, men should be at peace one with another: so history informs us, that, about this time, Janus' temple was shut up, and the whole world was at peace: Florus, the Roman historian, records, that then there was either a peace or a truce in the whole world: and, indeed, it was but fit that war should cease, when the Prince of Peace was born. Or else it may be meant of peace and good-will from God to man: now peace is not so much as good-will; for where there are not open acts of hostility, yet there may be secret grudges and displeasure: all sinners stand in a double state of distance to God; the one of opposition and defiance, the other of alienation and estrangement: peace destroys the one, and good-will the other; and, in the text, God, by his angel, proclaims both to the world; "peace" to reconcile them, and "good-will" to endear them, and both in the Lord Jesus Christ.

And so, accordingly, let us take notice,
By whom this heavenly anthem is sung.
What are the contents of it.

I. For the FIRST, it is said, that an innumerable company of the heavenly host praised God.

And we may well wonder what should occasion such mighty expressions of joy in those blessed spirits. Is it a time of joy when the great God is introducing himself into our flesh; when he is abasing himself to dust and ashes; when the infinite God is retiring, and shrinking up himself into a small worm? Is it a time of joy with them, when the brightness of the Deity, from whose reflections only they borrow all their shining and luster, is now eclipsed in a frail body? Strange, that they should make this day of heaven's humiliation, their festival and day of thanksgiving!

Yet, possibly, we may give a threefold account of it.

i. The holy angels rejoiced at the birth of Christ, BECAUSE IT GAVE THEM OCCASION TO TESTIFY THEIR DEEPEST HUMILITY AND SUBJECTION.

To be subject to Christ, whilst he sat upon the throne of his kingdom, arrayed with unapproachable light, controlling all the powers of heaven with a beck, was no more than his dreadful majesty and his infinite glory exacted from them: but, to be subject to him in a manger, as well as on the throne, when he had, as it were, hid his beams, and made himself recluse in the human nature; (for the angels are subject to him, as the Apostle maintains, Heb. ii. 8: "We see not yet all things put under him;") this was not obedience only, but in a sense it was a condescension. Some of the schoolmen, those busy priers into all the secrets of heaven, think that the pride, which thrust the apostate angels out of heaven, was their disdaining to serve Christ in his state of humiliation and abasement; which they then, by revelation, knew would certainly come to pass in the fullness of time: and that the rest of their fellow angels preserved their station, by professing their cheerful willingness to be common servants to the Mediator, when he himself should appear in the form of a servant. Now is the time of their trial: their King, whose infinite essence gilds all the universe, doth now lie housed in a stable, cradled in a manger: there he lies, under all the dishonors of men, obscure in his birth, and shortly to be exposed to hardships, to the assaults of the devil, to buffetings and cruel scourgings, and at last to die as a malefactor. This is that "stone of stumbling," which hath long lain in the way both of the Jews and Gentiles: this is the offense of the cross, to which their pride would never stoop: this is the "foolishness" of the Gospel, which "the wisdom of this world" did deride. What! for God to command them to believe in such a contemptible person as Jesus of Nazareth! what were this, but to destroy their reason, that he might save their souls? They scorn to own him, in his meanness, for their Saviour; whom yet the glorious angels scorn not to own, even in his meanness, for their Lord and King. And, therefore, we find how ready they are to wait upon him, in the greatest instance of his abasement: when he was in the wilderness, among howling beasts, tempted by the devil, that roaring lion, it is said, then angels "ministered unto him:" Matt. iv. 11: when he was in an agony, and the heavy sense of God's wrath squeezed from him large drops of bloody sweat, an angel, it is said, strengthened him: Luke xxii. 43. And now the time is come, wherein they may express their fidelity and obedience, in the lowest estate

of their Lord. And this is the first reason, why the holy angels rejoiced at the birth of Christ, because now they have an opportunity of expressing their humility and subjection to their Lord and King.

ii. The angels rejoiced at the birth of Christ, BECAUSE THE CONFIRMATION OF THAT BLESSED ESTATE OF GRACE AND GLORY, WHEREIN THEY NOW STAND, DEPENDED UPON HIS INCARNATION.

God, upon Christ's undertaking the great work of his Mediatorship, made over to him the whole world, as it were, by deed of gift: Matt. xxviii. 18: "All power," saith Christ, "is given unto me in heaven and in earth." The government of all creatures is laid upon his shoulders: and, therefore, if there be so great a multitude of holy angels preserved in their blissful state beyond all danger of apostasy, it must only be ascribed to Christ as God-Man. Hence he is styled, Col. ii. 10, "the head of all principality and power:" they are members of Christ, as well as we: they are united to him by love, as we are by faith: they are part of the Church of Christ, as well as we: they are glorified saints, triumphing in heaven; we, militant on earth, and aspiring thither. Eph. i. 10, it is said, God gathers "together in one all things in Christ, both which are in heaven, and which are on earth, even in him:" we and they are sheltered together under the same vail of Christ's flesh: and, as the saints on earth derive from Christ the grace of perseverance, which keeps them from drawing back to perdition; so also do the angels in heaven. Once, when the great God hurled the apostate spirits down into the burning lake, their own wills were then mutable, and their estate too: they might have conspired in the same rebellion, and partaken of the same destruction; but that, it is probable, the Mediator interposed to secure and confirm them: and therefore they rejoiced at the birth of Christ, wherein they saw the Godhead actually united to the human nature; since the merit of this union, long before that, prevailed for their happy perseverance.

ii. The holy angels rejoiced at the birth of Christ, FROM THE FERVENT DESIRE THEY HAVE OF MAN'S SALVATION.

Many thrones in heaven are vacant: God hath expelled thence many legions of devils: and it is the fancy of some, that the number of those, who shall be saved, is equal to the number of the fallen angels; as if they were appointed by God, to succeed to their places and dignities. Now the angels have an earnest desire

to have these rooms filled; and to have more members added to their heavenly assembly: hence we find, Luke xv. 10; "There is joy in the presence of the angels of God over one sinner that repenteth." The news of a sinner's conversion is entertained with applause: it makes a festival in heaven, that now another man is made a free denizen of that holy city. And, if they thus rejoice at the conversion of a sinner, needs must they rejoice at the incarnation of a Saviour; since this is the root and foundation of our conversion, of our hope, and of all our happiness. Thus you see the reasons, why the holy angels rejoiced so exceedingly at the birth of Christ.

II. I might likewise have added, that the angels rejoiced at the birth of Christ, because there is laid in it the great and wonderful design of God's glory; but that falls under the second general topic, and that is, **WHAT THIS ANGELIC SONG CONTAINS IN IT.**

It is set down in three most amiable and excellent things, *glory, peace, and good will*, which are here applied to their several objects: "Glory to God, peace on earth, and good will towards men."

i. To begin with the first, **GOD'S GLORY.**

Now God's glory is of two sorts, essential and declarative.

God's essential glory is nothing else, but the infinite perfections of his own nature: it is a constellation of all his inconceivable attributes, of wisdom, power, holiness, and the like, into his own ever blessed essence. And, thus, God was from all eternity: before ever there was creature made to admire him, he was infinitely glorious in himself.

The declarative glory of God is nothing else, but that visible splendor and luster, which reflects from the essential glory, upon the notice and intimation that the creatures have of it. Thus we are said, to give glory to God; not that we can contribute any thing to him, and set any jewels in his crown, which did not shine there before; but when we observe and admire those bright corruscations of his attributes, which appear in several ways that God takes to express them; then we glorify God, when we admire those strictures of God's essential glory, which appear in his attributes. So, here, when the angel sung, "Glory to God in the highest;" the meaning is, "Let heaven and earth behold, with admiration, and acknowledge those attributes of God, which now shine forth in the incarnation of his Son."

From the words thus opened, let me observe, that,

THE ABASING NATIVITY OF JESUS CHRIST, IS THE HIGHEST
ADVANCEMENT OF GOD'S GLORY.

This is a strange riddle to human reason ; which is apt to judge it a most preposterous course, for God to raise his glory out of the humiliation and abasement, yea out of the very ruins, of his Son. "What if God had thrown open the gates of heaven, and given all the world a prospect into that heavenly and glorious palace; there to have seen the throne of majesty and his glittering attendants, ten thousand flaming spirits ready to execute his will, cherubim and seraphim flying as swift as lightning within those boundless roofs; would not this have been more expressive of God's glory, than thus to cloister it up and immure the Deity in clay? To expose Him, who was God, to the miseries of wretched man, to an ignoble and cursed death? The manger in which he lay, and the cross on which he hung, were not high places of any glorious appearance."

Thus may carnal reason urge, upon this score.

The Apostle, in 1 Tim. iii. 16, speaking of the incarnation of Christ, calls it "the mystery of godliness." It is a riddle, and a mysterious one: not only how it should be, that the eternal and infinite God should unite himself in oneness of person with frail and despicable flesh; but why it should be done.

Now, to give you some account of this, I shall briefly, in a few particulars, show you how much glory redounds to God hereby.

1. In the birth of Christ, *God glorified the riches of his infinite wisdom.*

This was a contrivance, that would never have entered into the hearts either of men or angels. Heaven, at this very day, stands astonished at it: angels are continually looking into it, and confess their understandings infinitely too short to fathom it. 1 Cor. i. 24. Christ is called "the wisdom of God." He is, first, the essential wisdom of God, as he is the second person of the ever-blessed Trinity: he is the intellectual word, that was in the beginning "with God," and "was" also "God" himself. He was likewise the declarative wisdom of God, as Mediator; God-man united in one person. Let us briefly state the difficult case concerning man's salvation; that, withal, we may see whether it was not the contrivance of infinite wisdom. Justice and mercy lay in their different claims for sinful man: severe justice pleads the law and the curse, by which the souls of sinners are forfeited to vengeance; and therefore challengeth the malefactors, and is ready to drag

them away to execution; mercy interposes, and pleads, that, if the rigorous demands of justice be heard, it must lie an obscure and an unregarded attribute in God's essence forever: it alone must be excluded, when all the rest had their share and portion. The case is infinitely difficult: call an assembly of angels to debate the case: when all is said, we find no way to accommodate this difference: it is beyond their reach, how to satisfy justice in the punishment of sinners, and yet to gratify mercy in their pardon. Here now, in this embarrassing case, is the wonderful wisdom of God seen: justice demands that man should die; saith God, "My Son shall become man, and die under thy hands: seize upon him, and pursue him through all the plagues and curses which my law threatens: only, there, satisfy thyself on the surety: my mercy shall forgive and save the principal." Think what a shout and applause heaven gave at the decision of this great controversy. Oh the infinitude of thy wisdom, that couldst contrive means to reconcile such different interests, and entwine thy glory with them both! Oh, it is delightful for reason to lose itself in such a divine meditation: for it is an unfathomable deep into which the soul may enter: it utterly swallows up all our apprehensions: we never find ourselves at such a ravishing ecstasy of loss, as when we trace out the contrivances and admirable ways of our recovery.

2. The birth of Christ *glorified the almighty power of God.*

It was his infinite power, that spread abroad the heavens, that poised the earth in the midst of the air: and it would be a glorious expression of power, if God should draw up this globe of the earth to the heavens; or if he should let down the concave of heaven to earth. This God hath done in the miraculous birth of Christ he hath joined heaven and earth together: he hath made an inseparable union between them: he hath caused heaven and earth to meet in the midway: he hath raised earth to heaven, and lowered heaven to earth. It is an effect of the almighty power of God, to unite himself to human nature, to frail flesh: this was to put forth his power, only to make himself weak. Is it not almighty power, that the infinite inconceivable Godhead should unite to itself dust and ashes; and be so closely united, that it should grow into one and the same person? The glory of God's power is hereby exceedingly advanced.

3. By the birth of Christ, *God glorified the severity of his justice.*

His Son must rather take flesh and die, than that this attribute should remain unsatisfied. And so strict was God, that, when he found but the imputation of sin upon his Son, justice arrests him.

And, indeed, by this course the justice of God was more fully satisfied, than if it had seized upon the offenders themselves: for they are but finite, and cannot bear the utmost severity and infliction of divine wrath and vengeance: this, the Son of God can and hath done; who, by virtue of the divine nature, underwent it all, and came triumphantly from under it all. So that God glorified the attribute of his justice more, by sending Jesus Christ into the world, to undergo the execution of that wrath that was due to sinners; than if he had taken particular vengeance upon sinners, and sent away every soul of them to hell. No other sacrifice could avail to appease the divine justice, but that true and only sacrifice of the Son of God, "who, through the eternal Spirit, offered himself without spot to God." Heb. ix. 14. And therefore we find it expressed, Heb. x. 5, "Sacrifice and offering thou wouldst not, but a body hast thou prepared me;" for, because the divine nature is altogether impassible, and not at all subject to grief, sorrow, or sufferings, it was therefore necessary that the Mediator between God and man should be man as well as God; for, by this ineffable union, the one nature suffers and the other supports, the one conflicts and the other conquers; and, for the payment of our debt, the one brings the ore, the other stamps it and makes it valuable. And, by this means, likewise, satisfaction is made unto justice in the same nature that sinned; for, as man offended, so man also is punished: the same, which made the forfeiture, makes the redemption. "For, as by man came death, by man came also the resurrection of the dead:" 1 Cor. xv. 21, the same, which was shamefully foiled, doth now most gloriously overcome: Heb. ii. 14, "Forasmuch as the children are partakers of flesh and blood, he also himself likewise took part of the same; that, through death, he might destroy him that had the power of death, that is, the devil."

4. By the birth of Christ, *the truth and veracity of God are eminently glorified*; by fulfilling many promises and predictions, which were made concerning the sending of Christ into the world.

That primitive promise, Gen. iii., that the seed of the woman should bruise the serpent's head, which lay for many ages under types and figures, at the birth of Christ broke forth into accomplishment. All those prophecies, all those ceremonial resemblances, which, containing a Saviour in embryo, were in due time matured by the Holy Ghost, until the truth of God gave them all their expected issue in Christ's birth. So we have it, Gal. iv. 4,

"But when the fulness of time was come, God sent forth his Son," &c.

5. The birth of Christ *glorifies the infinite purity and holiness of God.*

When God formed the first Adam, he drew upon him the lineaments of his own image: and, because holiness is the most illustrious part of this image, his almighty Creator impressed upon him that best resemblance, that he might be a visible type of his infinite purity to all the world. But, sin having despoiled mankind of that glory, the best having but some few outlines and weak glimmerings of it restored unto them in their renovation; God was pleased to raise up a second Adam, who should be not only sinless but impeccable, and to exhibit him unto the world as the most perfect representation of his own holiness. And therefore his birth must be miraculous, that it might be pure: his extraordinary conception preserved him from original sin; and the hypostatical union, together with the immeasurable unction of the Holy Ghost, from all actual. And, though Jesus Christ was the greatest sinner in the world (as Luther, with no bad intent, made bold to call him) by imputation; yet had he no sin, either of nature or of practice, inherent in him. "He hath made him to be sin for us, who knew no sin:" 2 Cor. v. 21. And he "did no sin, neither was guile found in his mouth:" 1 Pet. ii. 22: and this, that he might be to us, not only an example of unspotted sanctity, but also a perfect idea of the infinite purity of God.

6. I might add, that, hereby, *the infinite love and pity of God are eminently glorified*; but, this falling under another part of my text, God's "good-will towards men," I shall make a transition thither; and shall leave this consideration, of the glory which God acquires to himself by the incarnation of his Son Jesus Christ, under these particulars.

ii. The second part of this angelic song, is PEACE ON EARTH. This *peace* may be understood three ways:

First. Either peace mutually between man and man: that, at the coming of Christ, men should be at peace with one another. Or,

Secondly. Peace internally, with a man's self: peace in the region of his own spirit and conscience. Or,

Thirdly. Peace with God: that his sovereign Majesty, whom we have affronted and offended by our sins, is now at peace with us and reconciled to us.

In each of these three senses, may this peace be understood, which these heavenly heralds proclaim; external, internal, and

eternal peace: "Peace on earth;" *i.e.*, peace to the inhabitants of the earth; peace with one another, peace in themselves, and peace with God: and all these procured and promoted by the birth of Christ.

For Christ was sent into the world under a twofold *σχεσις*, or habitude: as a Minister; as a Mediator.

As he is a Minister of peace, so he promotes it between men; and as he is the Mediator of peace, so he procures it between God and men: and, as he is both a Minister and a Mediator, so he effects it between man and himself, and fills the soul with joy and peace in believing.

It is the first of these, of which I intend to treat: and which, indeed, I judge to be most especially meant in the text; for the two latter, *viz.*, peace with God and peace in our own consciences, seem to appertain to the last clause of this heavenly anthem: the one being the same with God's good will towards us; the other being its effect and consequent, upon the comfortable sense of it in our own breasts.

Christ's coming into the world, therefore, tends to promote peace in it between man and man.

We find, in the records of history, that, about the time of our Saviour's birth, Janus' temple was shut up, and that there was an universal peace throughout the world. And Florus, speaking of those times, relates, that *Continua totius humani generis, aut pax erat, aut pactio*: that "There was either a peace, or truce, among all mankind." And, indeed, it was but fit that wars should cease, when the Prince of Peace was born. The divine wisdom so disposed of human affairs, that he, who was not to strive, nor "cry.... nor cause his voice to be heard in the street," should then come into the world, when it was serene, and enjoyed halcyon days: when there were no strifes, nor wars, nor confused noises, nor garments rolled in blood.

The very name of *peace* is sweet and lovely: it is the calm of the world, the smile of nature, the harmony of things, a gentle and melodious air struck from well-tuned affairs; a blessing, so excellent and amiable, that in this world there is but one preferable to it, and that is, holiness. And, certainly, great "glory" doth "dwell in" that land, where these two sister blessings, "righteousness and peace," do meet and kiss "each other," as the Psalmist speaks, Ps. lxxxv. 9, 10. I know, that there are hot and turbulent spirits enough abroad, who are apt to suspect whatsoever is spoken on the behalf of peace, to be to the disadvantage of holiness: and,

perhaps, some men's zeal may be such a touchy and froward thing, that, though an angel from heaven, yea an innumerable multitude of them, proclaim it; yet they cannot believe there may be "glory to God in the highest," whilst there is "peace on earth."

Indeed, if peace and sanctity were incompatible, or if any unhappy circumstances should compel us to redeem the one at the price of the other; we ought rather to follow righteousness through thorns and briars, than peace in its smoothest way strewed with roses. But there is no such inconsistency between them: for, certainly, that God, who hath commanded us to follow both peace and holiness, Heb. xii. 14, supposeth that they themselves may well go together. We may well suspect that zeal to be but an unclean bird, that delights to prey upon the dove; and those erratic lights, which make the vulgar gaze and the wise fear, to be but glaring comets, whose bloody aspects and eccentric irregular motions threaten nothing but wars, ruin, and desolations. Righteousness doth not oblige us, so soon as any thing is passed contrary to our present judgments and persuasions, nay suppose it be contrary to the truth also, straight to furbish our weapons, to sound an alarm, and to kill others in defense of that cause for which we ourselves rather ought to die. This is not to part with peace for righteousness; but to sacrifice both peace and righteousness, to injustice and violence. The cause of God, of piety and religion, may frequently engage us to forego our own peace, as sufferers and martyrs; but never to disturb the public peace of our country, as fighters and warriors.

Now this public and civil peace is mightily promoted, by Christ's coming into the world as a minister: for, since the work and office of a minister is to teach both by doctrine and example, Christ hath both ways, as a perfect minister of peace, taught us to "follow peace with all men." For,

1. *All the precepts of his doctrine* do directly tend to establish peace among men.

There are but two things, which can be supposed to violate peace: doing wrong unto others; revenging wrongs done unto us, by others; and both these, the doctrine of Christ doth strictly prohibit.

(1) Christianity teacheth us, *not to offer any injury unto others.*

It obligeth us to the strictest rules of justice and equity; and, whatsoever is not correspondent with the most rigid observation of these, it utterly forbids and condemns. Our Saviour hath fixed and sealed the great standard of all natural righteousness: Matt.

vii. 12: "Whatsoever ye would that men should do to you, do ye even so to them;" and frequently presseth that brief summary of the second table, "Thou shalt love thy neighbor as thyself:" certainly, there can no place be left for wrongs and injustice, where our love to ourselves is made the measure of our love to others, and the care of our own welfare the very model and pattern of our care for theirs. Neither doth Christianity restrain only the outward violent acts of injustice and rapine; but it looks inward, and lays a law upon our very thoughts and desires: it forbids us to think or judge hardly of another, to despise him in our hearts, or to be angry with our brother without a cause: so wonderfully accurate is the doctrine of Christ in this particular, that it not only prohibits us to wrong them really in their persons, but we must not so much as wrong the very shadow and idea of them in our minds: and, as well those, who nourish any secret grudge against them in their hearts, or seek by any clandestine artifices to undermine their credit and repute, as those, who are more openly and tumultuously injurious, break this peace, which the angels here proclaim, and which our Saviour himself came to preach to the world.

(2) The doctrine of Christ forbids all private revenge, and retaliation of wrongs and injuries done unto us.

For, indeed, there is no other difference between him that doth a wrong, and him that requites it, but only that the one is a little sooner wicked than the other. Upon this our Saviour frequently insists; as that, which is the very genius of the gospel, and the very spirit which it breathes: Matt. v. 38, 39: "Ye have heard that it hath been said, An eye for an eye, and a tooth for a tooth: but I say unto you, that ye resist not evil: but whosoever shall smite thee on the right cheek, turn to him the other also." These and the following precepts must not, indeed, be understood literally: as that scoffing apostate Julian impiously derided them, who, when he had commanded some Christians to be buffeted, asked them, in scorn, why they did not turn the other cheek also: for neither our Saviour himself, nor St. Paul, invited the injuries that were done to them, but rather sharply reprov'd those who unjustly smote them. But the meaning is, that we ought patiently to bear the wrongs which are done us; and to be willing, rather to suffer a second injury, than to revenge the first. Yea, v. 44, our Saviour raiseth his doctrine a strain higher; and not only forbids us to requite wrongs with wrongs, but commands us to requite injuries with courtesy: "I say unto you, love your enemies: bless

them, that curse you: do good to them, that hate you: and pray for them, which despitefully use you, and persecute you." And St. Paul, who most exactly follows both our Saviour's doctrine and example, urgeth the very same, Rom. xii. 20; "If thine enemy hunger, feed him; if he thirst, give him drink." This is all the revenge, which the gospel permits: this is that excellent doctrine, which our Saviour came to preach: this is that doctrine, which he hath given us commission to declare and publish to the world, to guide our feet in the way of peace; that we might all be united, as by faith and obedience unto God, so in love and charity one to another. But, alas! may we not justly complain, that this excellent temper is rarely to be found among Christians, in these our days? Would they not be ready to wonder at it, as some strange and unheard of doctrine, if we should expostulate with them, as the Apostle doth, 1 Cor. vi. 7? "Why do ye not rather take wrong? why do ye not rather suffer yourselves to be defrauded?" Is it ever likely we should prevail with those, who are apt to do wrong and defraud others, to be content quietly to pass by the wrongs and injuries that others do them? Will they part with their own right, who are so ready to invade the rights of others? And, yet, if this hard lesson be not learnt by us, we frustrate one great and special end of Christ's coming into the world: he came to be a minister of peace; and hath taught us neither to do wrong, nor to retaliate it: the first were sufficient to establish a general peace, were it but generally observed; but, in case others will break the peace and be injurious to us, Christ hath strictly enjoined us the observation of the latter, that, though we cannot be quiet, yet we may be innocent. Thus you see how the doctrine of Christ tends to promote peace.

2. *The examples of Christ* all tend unto peace.

His whole life was the very pattern of meekness and gentleness. "When he was reviled, he reviled not again; when he suffered, he threatened not;" 1 Pet. ii. 23: but, with infinite patience, bore the indignation of God and the indignities of men. Yea, we find him very careful of giving any offense, both in matters civil and ecclesiastical: when tribute was demanded of him, though he pleads his right to be exempted, as being a descendant of the royal line; yet, Matt. xvii. 27, "Lest we should offend them," &c. What! the great God so cautious of giving offense to vile creatures, whom he was able to speak, to look into nothing? Yea, he would rather work a miracle, than occasion an offense; and make the sea pay tribute to him, rather than he not pay tribute to the state. Again,

we find that he accommodated himself to the received custom of the Jewish Church; and that, in a matter wherein there was the greatest appearance of reason that could be, to have dissented: he sits at the passover with his disciples; although it be plain that the first institution of it was to eat it standing, with shoes on their feet, and staves in their hands: none of which rites our Saviour observed; but defers so much to the authority and custom of the Church, and that a very corrupt one too, that he would not differ from them in a matter that was merely circumstantial, though they themselves differed from the primitive institution. Certainly, if so much could be objected against the rites and orders of our Church, as might have been objected against this custom of the Jewish Church, those, who now raise such great mountains out of little matters, might, I will not say with more confidence and clamor, but doubtless with more show of reason, decry them as human inventions, sinful impositions, unwarranted innovations, and contrary to the word of God: and yet our blessed Saviour, in a peaceable condescension, conforms himself to the practice of the Church in which he lived; and, because the Roman manner of reclining or sitting was then the received custom among them, he likewise sits with his disciples. And, therefore, let me only, by the way, note to you, that this sitting of our Saviour at his supper is most imprudently and unwarily urged against our kneeling: for their argument may be forcibly retorted against them, that, because Christ sat at his supper, therefore we ought to kneel: for, since there was so much to be said for standing at the passover, out of the express word of God and the primitive institution, and yet our Saviour, out of compliance with the usage of the Church, chose rather to sit; how much more ought we, who have nothing left to determine the gesture, to conform ourselves to the usage of the Church in which we live, and whose members we are! For this is to conform ourselves, not indeed to the gesture, for so neither do our opposers themselves; but to the intent and design of Christ, which was peace and unity.

And thus you see how Christ was sent into the world to be a minister of peace; to preach it in his doctrine, and to commend it to us by his practice and example. The gospel is the gospel of peace: the precepts of it are all meek and peaceable: the ministers of it are ambassadors of peace: and the fruits of it, where it hath its due effect, are joy and peace.

But, here, it may be objected, "How is it then that our Saviour

himself tells us, Matt. x. 34, 35: 'Think not that I came to send peace on the earth: I came not to send peace, but a sword. For I am come to set a man at variance against his father, and the daughter against her mother, and the daughter-in-law against her mother-in-law?' and one would think this is far enough from turning 'the heart of the fathers to the children, and the heart of the children to their fathers.' Mal. iv. 6. And do we not find it, by obvious experience, that religion hath sowed more strifes and dissensions, and occasioned more tumults and uproars in the world, than ever tyranny or ambition did?"

To this I answer, We must distinguish, between the direct end of Christ's coming into the world, and the accidental issue and event of it. The end of Christ's coming, was to pacify the world; and to teach it a religion, which is pure and peaceable: but, accidentally, the event hath proved quite contrary; for religion being avowedly the dearest and most precious of all our enjoyments, men are apt to preserve it by undue and violent courses; and, because we can never think it secure enough, unless others embrace it too, we are generally very ready to impose our own sentiments upon them, and to judge that we do them no wrong whilst by any means we constrain them to what, in our own opinion, is most excellent, and the only truth which all ought to profess. And therefore those, who were zealous for their heathenish superstition and idolatry, embroiled the whole world in persecutions and blood, to suppress the growing doctrine of Christianity: and, among those, who profess Christianity itself, what heats and animosities, what endless controversies and perpetual contentions, are agitated! Each sect and party blows up the coals, till they have inflamed both Church and state; and differences about small and trivial matters too often break forth into all the extremities of rage, war, and bloodshed. Yet this is not to be imputed to the religion of Christ, but to the pride and ignorance of men: their ignorance, in that they know not the truth; or their pride, in that they will not submit unto it.

The gospel is free from all that blood, which hath been rashly and unwarrantably shed in quarrels about it. It teacheth us the way of peace perfectly; and, would all men be persuaded to submit their passions and their interests to its precepts, we might soon beat our "swords into ploughshares, and our spears into pruning hooks;" for the whole spirit of the gospel breathes nothing else but love and obedience, condescension and yielding: love, to one

another; obedience, to our superiors; condescension and yielding, either to the malice of our enemies, or to the weakness of our brethren.

But, alas! pride, and passion, and self-interest, and a stiff adherence to former apprehensions have, now-a-days, eaten out the meekness and patience of a Christian spirit. Each values himself by the boldness of his opposition. He, who can find most faults, and most bitterly inveigh against them, is the best man; and, whosoever hath but wit enough to make a quick and confident reply, begins now to think of setting up for himself to head a party, and control all orders both civil and sacred: and I wish they may never again attempt to write themselves saints in the rubric of their brethren's blood.

And yet, I pray, consider: what are all our dissensions about? Did we differ in any fundamental points either of faith or practice, we were then indeed to contend earnestly for them, and to resist unto blood; yet not the blood of others, but our own. But, when mere modes and circumstances, things altogether in themselves extraneous to religion, and by all parties, acknowledged not to be necessary nor essential to it, shall yet be so eagerly contested, as if the whole weight of religion and the eternal salvation or damnation of men's souls turned upon those hinges, to the violation of charity, peace, and order; what can we think, but that God may be justly provoked to try whether we will be as zealous about the necessary and vital principles of religion, as we are hot and fiery about small indifferences and unimportant circumstances? For my part, I shall always think that the power and savor of the gospel hath taken most hold on those, who are willing, for the preservation of such an inestimable blessing as peace, to comply with any thing, and to do any thing but sin. So long as the doctrine of faith which we preach, the duties of obedience which we press, the ordinances of Jesus Christ which we administer, are the very same; since we profess the same Lord, the same faith, the same baptism, the same God and father of all, what should hinder our coalition and union together in the bond of peace? What! shall we rend the coat of Christ in pieces, only because there are some loops and fringes sewed to it? Shall we separate from communion, and crumble ourselves into endless fractions; perpetuate irreconcilable divisions and animosities, and run ourselves into that which is clearly sinful; to avoid what, at worst, is but doubtful? If any can as evidently prove out of the word of God, that those debated forms and modes are sins; as it can be certainly

proved out of the word of God, that, to join in church fellowship and the communion of holy ordinances, to preserve the peace and unity of the Church, and to yield obedience to things required which are not in themselves unlawful, are duties, in comparison with which weighty matters of the law, all disputes about forms and circumstances are but mere trifles: I shall then yield; and confess, that they ought not to purchase peace, how desirable a blessing soever it be, at the loss of truth or the price of a sin. But, till this is done, if any can dispense with the express doctrine and command of Christ, of preserving peace and unity, and joining in all his public ordinances, rather than submit to those things which can never be evinced to be contrary to the command of Christ; yea, and which those, who most of all dissent, cannot but judge to be disputable: I must needs say, that such an one strains at a gnat, and swallows a camel; for conscience of a circumstance, neglects the substance; and, for fear of that which is but doubtful, doth that which is undoubtedly sinful.

Let me then, by the bowels of Christ, persuade you all to mind the same things, and to walk in the same way: and, since we are agreed in all fundamentals of faith, and in all the substantials of worship, let not other things, on which no more stress is laid than that of decency and order, be pretended as an obstacle to a happy agreement. But, if men will stumble at shadows, let them beware that they do not provoke God to take the substance of our religion quite from us, while we are so quarrelsome about the shape of it; and lest, while we strive to dress it up, each after his own garb and fashion, we lose not the body itself. Since we will needs be disputing, and opposing, and contradicting, though it be about a matter of nothing, may we not justly fear, that God will find out a full task and employment for our busy spirits, and put us upon the sad necessity of striving and contending about the very essentials of religion, and call us to shed our blood and lay down our lives for them? If ever such a time of trial should come upon us, which we have but too much cause to fear that God will hasten, because of our wanton dissensions; we shall then learn, to our cost, to put a difference between substantials and circumstantial, and shall look back with grief and shame upon our unreasonable and uncharitable divisions: yea, and then should we be heartily glad, could we but enjoy the liberty of the gospel and the ordinances of our Lord Christ, under any form of administration now so hotly and furiously controverted amongst us. Certainly, the stake will reconcile us all: we shall there embrace, and not cry

out on superstition and will-worship, and I know not what: the fire of martyrdom will purify all our intemperate heats; and, as our bodies, so our hearts, shall flame together in love and union, and together shall we ascend in that fiery chariot to the same heaven: for, when the sheep scatter and separate; and, though their appointed pastures be fair and flourishing, will yet, out of wantonness rather than necessity, stray into others; the Great Shepherd may justly send in those dogs or wolves to worry them, which will quickly make them run together again.

Since, then, the angels from heaven have proclaimed peace on earth; since the Lord of angels, Jesus Christ himself, came down from heaven to establish and promote peace on earth; beware that none of you, upon pretense of celebrating this great and joyful day, be guilty of violating either peace with men or peace with God. And, yet, what more common and ordinary, than now, in the time of this great joy, when the angels proclaim peace from heaven; what more common, than for many, by rioting, and drunkenness, and reveling, and quarrels, to proclaim war against one another, against God, against Christ, against piety, religion, temperance, and all that is sacred and venerable! Certainly, Christ came not into the world to patronize men's debaucheries; or to give you a fair occasion to be guilty of gluttony and drunkenness, to revile, reproach, and quarrel with one another: no; these are some of the sins, which he came to destroy; and, if you will indulge yourselves in these abominations, I cannot proclaim peace or good-will to you, but war and wrath from the Almighty and jealous God.

iii. I shall proceed to the INFINITE LOVE AND GOOD WILL, that God hath shown towards men.

Now I am entering upon a theme, enough to bewilder not only our expressions, but our apprehensions too; not only our apprehensions, but even our admiration itself. But, oh Lord! we can neither keep silence, nor speak out thy love: it is so great and so infinite, that it arrests our thoughts, and cramps our tongues, and leaves us no relief, but that expression of the Apostle: "Oh the depth of the riches both of the wisdom and knowledge of God," &c. Rom. xi. 33. Oh, the boundless dimensions of the love of God, which passeth knowledge! If the angels, who sang this song, "Peace on earth, good will towards men," should themselves be questioned, how great good will; even they must falter and stammer in it; they are continually prying into it; and there is

infinitely more in it than they have seen, and yet they see infinitely more than they can relate.

And what do we here, then, this day? What is it, that I attempt, or you expect? Haste home, therefore, oh Christians: yield yourselves to be swallowed up with the thoughts and meditations of that, which we cannot comprehend.

And, that I may give you some hints for your meditations to fix on, I shall endeavor to illustrate the great and infinite love of God in sending Christ into the world, from these considerations, viz., from

The *Person*, that was sent.

The *manner* and *circumstances* of this sending.

The *persons*, to whom he was sent.

The unspeakable *benefits*, that do redound to men, by this free gift of God.

In all these, God's good will towards man is admirably glorious, as I shall demonstrate to you.

1. If you consider *the Person sent*, this will exalt the goodness of God towards us.

And who is it? Is he an angel? Truly, if he were, herein divine love doth infinitely advance itself, that God should spare one of his own retinue from his attendance on him, to give such a glorious servant as an angel is, for the redemption of such a rebellious worm as man! But who is not astonished? It was not an angel, but the Lord of angels; not a servant, but a Son, is by the Father himself plucked from his own bosom, and sent with this message: "Haste, haste to the earth, for there are thousands of sinful and wretched creatures, sinning themselves to hell; and must forever fall under the strokes of my dreadful justice: step thou between them and it: receive thou my wrath thyself: do thou satisfy my justice; and die thou thyself, to save them." When God tried Abraham's obedience, he aggravated his command by many piercing words, that must needs go to the heart of a tender father: Gen. xxii. 2; "Take now thy son, thine only son.....whom thou lovest, and get thee into the land of Moriah; and offer him there for a burnt-offering, upon one of the mountains of which I will tell thee." This heightened Abraham's obedience, that, notwithstanding all these aggravations, yet he was willing to sacrifice his beloved son upon God's command. Truly, in the very same manner, God heightens and illustrates his own love towards us: he takes his Son, his only Son, the Son of his eternal love and delights, and offers him up as a sacrifice for the sins of men.

And this greatly extols the love of God, in that,

(1) He lay under no *necessity* of saving us at all.

As nothing accrues unto him by our happiness, so nothing would have been diminished from his essential glory by our eternal misery. For, as God created men and angels, not that we might supply his indigence but partake of his fullness: so he redeems us and preserves them, not that he might reap our services, but that we might enjoy his mercies. What saith Eliphaz, Job xxii. 2, 3? "Can a man be profitable unto God, as he that is wise may be profitable unto himself? Is it any pleasure to the Almighty, that thou art righteous? Or is it gain to him, that thou makest thy ways perfect?" And if we cannot profit God by serving him, much less certainly by receiving rewards for it. We can contribute nothing to his essential happiness; for God is forever blessed in the contemplation and enjoyment of his infinite perfections. It was not to ease the solitude and tediousness of eternity, that therefore God created the world: for all the delight, which he takes in any of his creatures, is only as he views his own perfections in them; which being eternally in himself before the world was, he then possessed the same felicity as now, without receiving any addition or variation from any thing that he hath made. As it is no advantage to the sun, that so many eyes behold its light; but it would still be as bright and glorious in itself, although no creatures were capable of receiving its rays: so is God infinitely glorious and blessed, in the excellencies of his eternal being and attributes; and would have been so forever, although he had never formed any creature to observe and adore the brightness of his perfections. And, if God gain nothing by creating us, then certainly neither doth he gain by saving us: all the tribute, that either angels or glorified saints pay unto him, is but love and praise; and these cannot suppose the person who receives them to be benefited, but to be beneficial. It is true, Christ was sent to seek and to save those that were lost, Matt. xviii. 11; but, if this gracious design had never been laid and all mankind had perished forever, the loss had been only to themselves, not to God; whose justice would then have had that whole glory, which is now divided between his justice and his mercy. If, therefore, it be commendation of love to be wholly disinterested, nothing can more gloriously advance the love of God, than that he should give his own Son for the redemption of such inconsiderable creatures, whose hatred and rebellions are but despicable, and their service and obedience unprofitable.

(2) But, as some affirm, God lay under no necessity of saving us in such a costly manner, by the death of his Son, but that he

might have freed us from death by the *absolute prerogative of his pardoning grace and mercy*, without shedding the blood of Christ.

And do you think, that in heaven, we should ever have complained for want of love in God to us, though he had brought us thither at a cheaper rate than now he doth? But this, though it might have been sufficient for our salvation, yet was it not sufficient for God's design, in the manifestation of the riches and glory of his great love to us: and, therefore, God will not go the most saving way to work, in compassing our salvation; but that way which shall most enhance his love to us. Is it not greater love in God towards us to part with Christ out of heaven, to break and bruise him, to make his soul an offering for sin and his blood a ransom for sinners; than if he had only, without any further circumstances, beckoned us up to heaven? This, therefore, must be the method, which divine wisdom will take, because divine love dictates it to be the most advantageous to commend his love to sinners. Oh, the supererogating mercy of God, that is not only contented to do what is barely sufficient for our salvation; but, over and above, adds what may be most expressive of his own love and affections to us! John iii. 16: "God so loved the world," &c. God so loved the world! How? So as to save it only? No; but he so loved it, as he gave his only begotten Son to save it. What, thy Son, Lord, thine only Son! Why, the destruction of the whole world is not a thing so considerable, as one sigh, one groan, one tear, or one drop of blood from that only Son of thine, whom thou gavest to save the world! But, however, God is resolved notwithstanding, that not only a sigh, groan, or tear; but the life of his Son also shall go, rather as a manifestation of his love to sinners, than for any absolute antecedent necessity of such a sacrifice.

2. Consider *the manner and circumstances of Christ's coming into the world*; and then also it will appear further, that there is in God an infinite love and good will towards men.

Here two points will be presented, viz., the *freeness* of the Father's gift, and the *humiliation* of the Son involved in its bestowal.

(1) God's love is exalted, in that he sent his only Son *freely*.

If men and devils had joined their forces, and made an assault upon heaven; yet they could never have plucked the Son of God's love from his eternal embraces: that world, which he had given to Christ, which afterwards had power to assault, kill, and crucify him; yet, before he was given, had no power to bring him into

the world. But God thinks it not enough, that this great gift comes from him freely and without compulsion: but he puts it a strain higher; and he gives Christ freely to us:

[1] Freely, in opposition to all *desert*; not only without, but against all merit and desert in us.

Certainly, man could no more merit Christ out of heaven, than he could have merited heaven without Christ: when God, out of his infinite wisdom, foresaw that we would despise and reject his Son, first spill his blood and then trample upon it; did he so hate his Son, as to account this demeanor of ours meritorious of him? Since we cannot merit the least good, how then could we merit so great a gift as Christ? Nay, which is more to the glory of God's free good-will, he bestowed Christ upon us, not only without any merit of ours, but without any merit of his also: it is free grace that endows us with any spiritual, with any eternal blessing: free grace doth sanctify our hearts and save our souls: yet all this Christ hath purchased for us, by the price of his own death: he is the merit of eternal salvation for us; yet it is free grace in bestowing it upon us: God will have a price paid him down for all other things of less value, that he may thereby set forth his own bounty, in parting with the greatest gift, his own Son, without price: Christ merited all other things for us; but the greatest of all he never merited for us, that is, himself: God hath put heaven, and glory, and the everlasting enjoyment of himself upon sale, as it were; that so this great gift of his Son may appear truly estimable, and his bounty absolute and infinite: but though he gives all things besides Christ, upon the account of Christ's merits; yet he gives Christ freely, without any intervening merit.

[2] God's love is free in the gift of Christ, in that he prevents not only our deserts, but our *desires*.

Begging alms does not lessen the charity and bounty of the donor; yet God is not willing to have his bounty so much forestalled, as it would be should we first ask for it. As for the good things of grace and glory, the most importunate suitors are usually the best speeders: "Ask, and ye shall receive: seek, and ye shall find: knock, and it shall be opened." But in the giving Christ to the world, he was "found of them that sought him not." And, in all this, was the design of love laid in the heart of God, from all eternity, before ever there were either prayers or tongues to utter them. This was a design of infinite contrivance, the possibility of which it could never enter into our hearts, or the hearts of angels to conceive; and what we could not conceive in our thoughts

and hearts, we could not beg with our mouths: but God, out of his own good-will to us, anticipates both our works and our words, both the merit of our hands and the requests of our mouths; and freely bestows his own Son to be our Saviour, without either our deserving or desiring him.

(2) As Christ was given freely, in respect to God; so *very ignominiously*, in respect to himself.

And this enhanceth the exceeding greatness of the love of God towards us: he was degraded in his birth, persecuted in his life, and accursed in his death. And, that he should thus deal with the Son of his love, that he should abase and afflict him only to show his love to us, seems, at the first blush, to intimate, that God preferred such worms as we are, before the Son of his bosom. And, here, let us,

[1] Consider Christ, in his *birth*.

What was it to be born of the royal line and stock of David? That family was now fallen to decay, when the heir-apparent of that royal family was Joseph, who was forced for the sustaining of his life to turn mechanic: yet of this family he chooseth to be a member, not when it was victorious and triumphant, but when it was sunk low, and did expire. He also chooseth out a mean, poor virgin, to become his mother: she is thought but a fit match for a carpenter. Before her marriage, she was not without some suspicion; and when about to bring forth her first born, none did so much regard the entreaties of Joseph, nor the necessities of Mary as to afford her a better room than a stable; where she herself was both mother and nurse, and, instead of a cradle, rocked Christ in a manger; and, though her heart yearned, yet she had no softer pillow to lay under him, than straw or hay.

[2] Nor doth his *life* repair the meanness of his birth.

No; he is "a man of sorrows, and acquainted with grief," from first to last. He becomes subject to his parents: he puts himself under the dominion of his own creatures: he follows his father's occupation; Mark vi. 3: "Is not this the carpenter?" As in scorn they said: He, that formed the heavens and the earth, learns himself to make houses! There was nothing of outward pomp or grandeur in his life: Isa. liii. 2: "He hath no form nor comeliness; and when we shall see him, there is no beauty that we should desire him," saith the prophet. He was maintained by the alms of a few poor, well-disposed women; tempted by the devil, persecuted by the Jews, betrayed by his own followers. This was the course of his life.

[3] If you consider his *death*, that was shameful, bloody, and accursed.

We see him on the cross, hanging on the soreness of his hands and feet; we see him pierced to the heart by a ruffian soldier: we see him crowned with thorns; and the precious blood trickling from the head, to meet those other rivers that were running from his side and feet: we see him forsaken by his disciples; and, what is more, we hear him complaining of being forsaken by God too. Oh blessed Saviour! what eyes can refrain from weeping, what heart from bleeding? Is this the entertainment that the world gives to thee, the dearest pledge that God hath or can send? Is this thy welcome to it? Is this thy departure out of it? Shall we mock and scourge, crucify, pierce, and murder thee? And wilt thou by all these outrages committed against thyself, accomplish our salvation? Oh victorious love! that can pardon when abused, and exalt us by being abased, and glorify us by being despised! Yet God will have it so, that his good will may be commended by the affronts and by the indignities, which peevish mankind puts upon it.

3. The infinite good will of God, in sending Jesus Christ into the world, appears to be glorious and great, if you consider *the persons to whom he was sent*.

The fallen angels stood in as much need of a Saviour, as we; and Christ was as well able to save them, as to save us; and they would have served God with more enlarged capacities, than we can possibly do: but, as soon as those glorious spirits sinned, God threw them down to hell; where they are bound in chains of massy darkness forever, never to have any release. Oh most dreadful severity towards them! Oh unspeakable love towards us! God passeth by the angels, and recovereth vile mankind, and raiseth them up out of the dust, that they might fill up those void places of the angels, that left their first station. This is that, which makes the devil rage; and this is that, which makes that old serpent to gnaw his tongue with anguish: that he should be cast down from heaven like lightning, and such vile worms as men are advanced to his place and honor. Truly, nothing puts a greater accent upon love, than when it is laid out upon those who are most unworthy, with a purpose thereby to make them worthy.

Thus is the love of God, in sending Christ, expressed; he comes and finds us unworthy; and he comes, that he might make us worthy. Now, here,

(1) Consider: This love is fixed upon repulsive and deformed

creatures, that so it might make them comely and beautiful. And this advanceth the free love of God, in sending Christ into the world.

You may see an elegant description of man in the state of nature, Ezek. xvi. 5, 6, where the prophet compares him to a poor forsaken infant, swathed in his own blood, cast into the open field, helpless for its weakness, and loathsome for its deformity. This is the very emblem of that condition, in which we ourselves are, in our natural and unregenerate state: we are cast out to the loathing of our persons; and impotent, that we cannot help ourselves. Whose bowels would not yearn to read this description, which the prophet makes, and which I have briefly opened to you? Now is there any thing of amiableness or loveliness in such an object as this, that God should part with his Son out of his own bosom? Yet, saith God, in the eighth verse, "Now when I passed by thee, and looked upon thee, behold, thy time was the time of love; and I spread my skirt over thee, and covered thy nakedness:" and "then washed I thee with water; yea, I thoroughly washed away thy blood from thee." Nay, further: our condition was such as the prophet Isaiah describes it to be, Isa. i. 6, "From the sole of the foot even unto the head, there is no soundness in it; but wounds, and bruises, and putrefying sores:" sores, that deformed us: sores, that would have destroyed us: now that God should send his blessed and well-beloved Son, the Lord Jesus Christ, to bind up and cure the sores of such deformed creatures as we are, doth not this speak his infinite love to us?

(2) This love is not only fixed upon deformed creatures, but also upon froward, peevish, and rebellious creatures.

Of all things in the world, nothing sooner provokes God's wrath, than a slight and contempt of his love. Now God foresaw, how men would slight his Son: yet, notwithstanding, he sends him: "He came unto his own, and his own received him not." I might enlarge on the history of our provocations, affronts, and injuries; all which God foresaw out of his own infinite wisdom: and yet, notwithstanding all, his good will prevailed to send Jesus Christ, who he knew would be scorned and rejected by them to whom he was sent.

4. I might be profuse in illustrating this good will of God, in sending Jesus Christ into the world, from *those many great benefits, of which, by Christ's coming, we are made partakers.*

Should I instance in temporal things, that would be an abatement to this love of God to us, and the purchase of Christ, whereby

we receive pardon of sin, reconciliation of our persons, acceptance with God, sanctification, adoption, hope of glory here, and possession of glory hereafter: all, in and through Jesus Christ

But I shall not insist upon these, but proceed to make some short APPLICATION.

You have heard somewhat, though infinitely short, of the good will of God, in sending Jesus Christ into the world: do not you believe it to be true? Why else do you solemnize this as a day of joy? Well, then, beware that you do not frustrate God's good will towards you, in giving Christ to you, by your debaucheries and profaneness on this good day, which you celebrate as a memorial of that great gift. Believe it, and it is sad to consider, as Christ's birth hath been the cause of the salvation of many a soul; so, it may be feared, that Christmas hath been the damnation of many a soul: what through rioting, drunkenness, reveling, gaming, and such like excesses, the name of Christ hath been greatly dishonored, under a pretense of honoring his birth. I have heard a story of a Turkish ambassador, long residing in one of the greatest courts in Christendom: when he returned home to his master, he was by him examined, what customs the Christians observe: he made this answer: that, for twelve days in the year, all the Christians ran mad: his observation was but too true, and too much to the disparagement of the Christian religion. And we may well question, whether there be not more wickedness committed in many places these twelve days, than in the other twelve months after. What, sirs, do you think that Christ came into the world only to give you an occasion to eat unto gluttony, and to drink unto drunkenness? Are not these some of the sins, which he came into the world to destroy? And will you make his coming into the world to patronize them? Observe, then, a day; but take the Apostle's direction: he, that observeth a day, let him observe it to the Lord: it is his rule, to observe it with a holy heart, with spiritual meditation, with heavenly affections. This is the only way to reap the benefit of God's good will, in sending Christ into the world; and this is the only way to ascribe glory to God, for his good will towards men.

MISCELLANEOUS SERMONS.

V.

A SERMON ON THE RESURRECTION OF CHRIST.

PREACHED ON EASTER-DAY.

Whom God hath raised up, having loosed the pains of death; because it was not possible that he should be holden of it. ACTS ii. 24.

THE Christian religion is founded upon such mysterious and supernatural truths, and the principles of it are so paradoxical to the received opinions of mankind, that the greatest persecution, which it ever found in the world, was not so much from fire and sword, racks and tortures, the evident cruelties of the first opposers of it, as from the magisterial dictates of partial and corrupt reason.

The philosophers, whom Tertullian calls the patrons of heretics, have established two peremptory maxims; utterly repugnant to what the Scripture reveals to us, both concerning our happiness and comfort. The one is, *Ex nihilo, nihil habetur*: "Out of nothing, nothing can be made:" directly leveled against the creation of the world. And the other is, *A privatione ad habitum non datur regressus*: "There is no restoration of the same being, after a total corruption and dissolution of it:" which still continues a great prejudice against the resurrection of our bodies; and with which the oracles of reason have so much troubled the world, that, whatsoever seemed in the least contradictory to it, they judged contradictory to common sense, and exploded as ridiculous and impossible.

Under these great disadvantages the Christian religion labored: whilst it not only owned the creation of the world out of nothing, formerly described by Moses; but more clearly and openly attested the resurrection of the dead, which before was not either so clearly known, or so clearly proved: for these doctrines were held so absurd by the great logicians of the world; whose minds were too deeply tinctured with contrary notions, that they looked upon the Christian religion as a design rather to destroy reason, than to save the soul: accounting it a very absurd thing to believe

in a crucified Saviour, as being a person weak and impotent; or the future resurrection, as being a thing utterly impossible.

We find the Apostle to the Corinthians, 1 Cor. i. 23, complaining that the Greeks, who were then the great masters of wisdom and learning, esteemed a crucified Christ "foolishness;" and thought those men little befriended by reason, who would depend for life upon one that lost his own; and who would venture to take off the shamefulness of the cross, or to silence those scoffs that were cast upon those, for their credulity, who affirm the wonderful resurrection of a dead Saviour, and his glorious triumph over death and the grave. For this seemed to them no other than to solve an absurdity by an impossibility; and to make reason more suspicious, in that they judged the fundamentals of reason must be overthrown, to make the fundamentals of Christianity any way tolerable or possible. Wherefore we find, that, even at Athens, that great concourse of wits, where all the sects of philosophers made their common retreat; yet when St. Paul "preached unto them Jesus and the resurrection," this doctrine seemed so absurd and foolish to them, and so contrary to all principles of right reason, that they forgot that civility which usually is found in men of inquisitive spirits, and brake out into open reproaches and revilings: "What will this babbler say?.....because he preached unto them Jesus and the resurrection." Acts xvii. 18.

No doubt, they wanted not very specious arguments to urge against the resurrection of the body.

As, first, the impossibility of a re-collection of the dispersed particles of men, resolved into their elements, and scattered by the four winds of heaven: though it might be very well retorted on the Epicureans, who disputed with St. Paul against the resurrection, that it was not so unlikely a thing that there might be a re-union of the scattered parts of the same man, as that there should be a fortuitous concourse of atoms at the first making of the world: yet this objection overbore and prevailed with the heathen, so that when they burnt the bodies of Christians, they cast their ashes into the rivers, to confute their hopes of ever being raised again; from whence they should be carried away into an unknown ocean, and there be made the sport of winds and waves. But, what our Saviour says upon the same occasion to the Sadducees, may be said unto these men: "Ye do err, not knowing the Scriptures, nor the power of God:" Matt. xxii. 29: for, unless their parts could be scattered beyond the reach of omnipotence; unless they could be ground so small, as to escape the knowledge and

care of God, who ordereth and rangeth every mote that plays up and down in the sunbeams; this dispersion of the body proves not the impossibility of their union, because the power and providence of God will gather up every particle of dust, and bring them together again, into the same place and order as now they are.

Another argument against the resurrection of the body, may be from the various changes, which dead bodies undergo: being, first, turned into earth; that, again, turned into grass and herbs; that, becoming nourishment for other men or beasts; that nourishment again passing into their substance; making a kind of transmigration of bodies, as Pythagoras would have that there was of souls: which is very evident in the case of Anthropomorphites, and cannibals, who have, of several parts of other men's bodies, compounded their own. And so the same question may be demanded, which the Sadducees asked our Saviour, concerning the seven brethren who married the same woman, whose wife of the seven she should be at the resurrection: so, here, those parts, which belonged to so many men, to which of them belong they in the resurrection, without detriment to the rest? Here the same answer occurs, which Christ gave them, Matt. xxii. 29: "Ye do err, not knowing the Scriptures, nor the power of God;" who is the best judge of property; and can resolve all those parts, by which any nourishment hath been received by any other creatures, unto their own proper bodies again.

And thus it appears, that these arguments against the resurrection of the body amount not to prove the impossibility of the effect; but only the supernatural almighty power of the efficient. Wherefore, granting the resurrection impossible, according to the original course of natural things; yet, when an omnipotent arm doth interpose, which gives laws unto it, who dares to say, that the creature may be brought to such a state of dissolution, as may outreach the dominion of the almighty Creator?

Upon these grounds it is, that the Apostle asketh, why it should be thought a strange and incredible thing, "that God should raise the dead:" Acts xxvi. 8; and, in the text, that he asserts the resurrection of Christ. And to prevent any fallacious cavils against it, he shows,

First. That God raised him from the dead; and therefore it was not to be accounted a thing impossible, since to God nothing could imply a contradiction.

Secondly. He doth not only assert the possibility of Christ's

resurrection, but the impossibility of his final continuance under the power of death.

The grave, which grasps and retains all other mortals, was not able to detain him who hath immortality and life dwelling in himself: "It was not possible that he should be holden of it;" therefore God hath raised him up, loosing "the pains of death."

"Whom God raised up." Here is the efficient cause of Christ's resurrection, in the concurrent action of the whole Trinity; for all, that God doth out of himself, is ascribed to all the three Persons. Sometimes, it is ascribed to the Father: as the Apostle speaks: "The God of Abraham, and of Isaac, and of Jacob, the God of our fathers, hath glorified his Son Jesus; whom ye delivered up, and denied.....the Holy One, and the Just, and desired a murderer.....and killed the Prince of Life, whom God hath raised from the dead:" Acts iii. 13-15. Sometimes, it is ascribed to the Son, who, by the infinite power of his divinity, raised up his human nature from the grave: so our Saviour himself tells us, "I lay down" my life "of myself." "I have power to lay it down, and I have power to take it again:" John x. 18. The same may be collected of the Holy Ghost, from the words of the Apostle: "If the Spirit of him, that raised up Jesus from the dead, dwell in you, he that raised up Christ from the dead, shall also quicken your mortal bodies by his Spirit:" Rom. viii. 11: now if the Spirit of God can quicken our bodies, the same Spirit also can quicken the body of Christ; since it is the same Spirit that quickens both the head and the members.

"Having loosed the pains of death." In some copies it is, "Having loosed the pains of hell:" which, possibly, gave occasion to that fond opinion of some, that Christ descended into hell, and there underwent the pains and penalties of that infernal place, as full satisfaction to the justice of God; and that these were the pains, from which God raised or loosed him in his resurrection. But this conceit is erroneous and extravagant, and deserves no serious confutation; especially because it plainly contradicts Christ's *consummatum est* upon the cross; for, when Christ had undergone his sufferings on the cross he said, "It is finished, and so.....gave up the ghost:" John xix. 30. If Christ therefore did undergo any farther sufferings and pains, than those sufferings which he underwent on the cross, those sufferings would have been so far from being completed and finished, that they would have been but the prelude, and beginning of his sorrows. "Having loosed the pains of death" implies no more, but that God raised Jesus Christ from the death, which, after many dolorous pains, he suffered.

It follows: "It was not possible that he should be holden of it."

This is that on which I intend principally to insist.

I. And here, I shall show UPON WHAT ACCOUNTS IT WAS ALTOGETHER IMPOSSIBLE FOR CHRIST TO BE DETAINED UNDER THE POWER OF DEATH: and my arguments for the proof thereof are these that follow.

i. It was impossible that Christ should be held under the power of death, BECAUSE OF THAT GREAT AND INEFFABLE MYSTERY OF THE HYPOSTATICAL UNION OF THE DIVINE AND HUMAN NATURE IN THE PERSON OF CHRIST.

There are three unions, the belief of which is the foundation of the greatest part of the Christian religion, and which are wholly beyond the reach of reason: the mystical union of a believer unto Christ: the union, or rather unity, of the three glorious Persons, the Father, the Son, and the Holy Ghost, in one nature: and this hypostatical union of two natures in one person, in the Mediator. It is a mystery, into which angels pry and adore, with wonder and astonishment, how the eternal, only-begotten Son of God should assume flesh to himself, in so close and intimate a conjunction, that, though he is eternal, yet he should be born; though he is immortal, yet he should truly die; and though he were truly dead, yet he should raise himself to life again. These are things, which seem very inconsistent one with another; yet they truly come to pass through this miraculous union, which transcends the reach of reason, as far as these things do that of nature: that the same person, who is eternal, should be young, yea be born in the fullness of time; that the same person, who hath immortality and life dwelling in himself, should also die a shameful and accursed death; that the same person, who was truly and really dead, yet had a power to quicken and recover himself: John x. 18. And this was it, which "declared" him "to be the Son of God with power," as the Apostle speaks, even "by" his "resurrection from the dead:" Rom. i. 4.

And, indeed, if he had not risen from the dead, the Deity would have suffered in the opinion of the world; nor would they have believed him to be the Son of God, who would suffer himself to lie under the dominion of death, longer than the end of his death required it.

And this I shall demonstrate to you by two arguments: only premising this, which is a common and true maxim among divines:

that when the natural union between Christ's body and soul was dissolved, yet both soul and body did retain the hypostatical union to the divine nature: the divine nature was united to the body of Christ, when the soul was separated from it.

1. *If Christ could not have raised himself, it must have been either from a want of power, or from a want of will, to do it.*

He could not want power to raise himself, because he was God; equal in power, and in all other divine attributes, with the Father.

As the resurrection of the dead is not impossible to the infinite power of God; so neither can it be, that that God, who had a will to assume our flesh, should want a will to raise it up: that that God, who so loved the human nature, as to associate it into oneness of person with himself, should yet suffer it to continue under the power of death; which is, of all things, most contrary to his natural inclinations. We see Christ, in his agony, prayed most fervently that the bitter cup might pass from him, insomuch that he strained clotted blood through him; and, certainly, one ingredient in that cup was the separation of soul and body by death; which is that, which even innocent nature itself abhorred, as destructive to him; yet, having taken our nature upon him for this very end, that, by "death he might destroy him that had the power of death, that is, the devil," Heb. ii. 14, he voluntarily submitted himself to undergo it; and, this end being fully accomplished by his death, and the truth of his death likewise attested by his lying three days in the earth, it was altogether impossible that that person, who had an abhorrence of death and a power to raise himself should continue longer under the arrest and dominion of it.

2. *Because of the union of the divine and human nature in the person of Christ, it was impossible that his flesh should see corruption; which yet it must certainly have done, had he not been raised in a short space after his death.*

For, since Christ's body was not a phantom, as some of old held, but made of true flesh, and of the same temper and constitution with ours, it must, without a miracle, have undergone such changes after death as ours shall do: and, to imagine the contrary, is but to feign one miracle, to avoid the necessity of another; even of the resurrection. But, it was utterly impossible that that body, which was united to both natures by a bond so close and inconceivable, should ever see corruption; that is, a putrefaction in the grave: this the Scripture clearly asserts to us: "Thou wilt not leave my soul in hell, neither wilt thou suffer thine Holy One to see corruption:" Acts ii. 27. And, also, because all bodies, which

are corrupted, turn into some other thing and some other nature; according to that undoubted maxim of the philosophers, *corruptio unius est generatio alterius*: hence this horrid and blasphemous consequence would follow, that the divine nature of the Son of God might have been joined to some other. So that it was necessary that Christ should be raised again, before any corruption or putrefaction, by ordinary course of nature, seized upon him.

ii. Another argument is this: It was impossible that Christ should be held by death, BECAUSE OF GOD'S VERACITY; AND THE TRUTH OF THOSE PREDICTIONS, WHICH WERE BEFORE MADE CONCERNING CHRIST, in those many types and prophecies of the Old Testament; all which God's faithfulness stood engaged to fulfill.

I shall only mention that famous prediction, which St. Peter here subjoins, as a proof of the subject of which I am now treating: Acts ii. 24, 25, 27: "It was not possible," says he, "that" Christ "should be holden of" death: "for, David speaketh concerning him.....Thou wilt not leave my soul in hell, neither wilt thou suffer thine Holy One to see corruption." And this prophecy the Apostle quotes out of the Psalmist: Ps. xvi. 10. That it did not belong to David, and that he did not speak it concerning himself when he indited that psalm, the Apostle shows, vv. 29, 30, of this chapter: where he proves that David was dead and buried, and underwent the common lot that all other dead bodies did, putrefying and moldering away in the earth; and therefore he was not that Holy One that should never see corruption, because that prophecy must belong to such an one who must so taste of death: and this is clearly implied in the former expression, "Thou wilt not leave my soul in hell," that is, in the state of the dead; for so is hell to be understood there, as I shall show more at large. Neither could it belong to any of those, who, before Christ, were raised miraculously from the dead, and brought back out of the state of death; yet was it not in such a manner, that they were not to return again to it: so that if they did not in the first, yet in their second dying they saw corruption. This then could belong to none of them, and therefore must of necessity belong to Christ. And since the Apostle lays so much stress on this argument, give me leave a little to consider the meaning of it, and how is applicable to him.

And, here, I shall not trouble you with the various opinions of those who have attempted to interpret these words, "Thou wilt not leave my soul in hell:" some thinking, that, by this hell, into

which Christ descended, is meant the place of the damned, where he preached the gospel to them, freeing those that would believe from their pains: others, that it was one great partition of it, called *limbus patrum*: "the repository of the souls of those fathers" who died in obedience to God and in faith of the Messiah, before Christ came in the flesh; and that the reason of his descent thither was, that he might release those souls from chains, and carry them with him to heaven: so that, ever since, that mansion in hell hath been left void, without any inhabitants. For these opinions are not capable of any sufficient proof.

I shall, therefore, give you that interpretation and judgment, which carries with it the strongest current, both of Scripture and reason. The word *hades*, which we translate *hell*, is very often, by the Septuagint, in the Old Testament, used to signify the grave, or the state of the dead: so, in Gen. xliv. 31, we translate it *the grave*; but it is the same word, that is used for *hell* in the text: and thus the word is used in other places of Scripture, as also in other authors, to signify the place and state of the dead and of separate souls. And, for the leaving of the soul of Christ in *hades*, or in *hell*, we must know, that it is a thing not unusual in Scripture, to call a man that is dead by the name of "soul:" so, the Septuagint translate that place in Leviticus, ch. xxi. 11. They shall not be defiled with "dead souls," meaning dead carcases: "neither shall they go in to any dead souls:" the word is "dead bodies." But, not to detain you any longer on this speculation, though of great use for the right understanding of this excellent place of Scripture: if we take "hell" for "the grave," we must take the soul for the body, "Thou wilt not leave my body in the grave;" but if, by "hell," be here understood the state of death, that is, the state of separation of soul and body, the interpretation will be more easy and natural: "Thou wilt not leave my soul" in a state of separation from the body; but wilt certainly unite them together again, and raise me up before I shall feel corruption.

Thus I have given you the interpretation of the prophecy of David, which, upon the account of God's truth and veracity, was to take effect in the resurrection of our Saviour; and, therefore, it being foretold that he should not see corruption, the faithfulness of God was obliged, within that time, inviolably to raise him up.

iii. Another argument is this: It was impossible that Christ could be held by death, UPON THE ACCOUNT OF GOD'S JUSTICE.

For justice, as it doth oblige to inflict punishment upon the guilty, so also to absolve and acquit the innocent. Now, though Christ "knew no sin," yet was he "made sin for us:" that is, our sins were imputed to and charged upon him; and, so, though taking them upon himself voluntarily, he became guilty of them. Hereupon, divine justice seized upon him, as being our surety; and demanded satisfaction from him for our offenses. Now no other satisfaction would be acceptable unto God nor commensurate with our sins, but the bearing of an infinite load of wrath and vengeance; which, if it had been laid upon us, must have been prolonged to an eternity of sufferings; for, because we are finite creatures, we cannot bear infinite degrees of wrath at once; and, therefore, we must have lain under those infinite degrees of wrath to an infinite duration: but, Christ being God, he could bear the load of infinite degrees of wrath at once upon him: in that one bitter draught, the whole cup of that fury and wrath of God, which we should have been everlastingly drinking off by little drops, Christ drank off at once. Now it is the nature and constitution of all laws, that, when a person, by undergoing a penalty which those laws require, hath made satisfaction for the offense committed, the person satisfying ought to be protected as innocent: it could not therefore consist with the justice of God, that, when Christ had satisfied his utmost demands, that any of the punishment due to our sins, for which he satisfied, should have lain upon him longer; for that would have been no other than punishing without an offense. Now nothing is clearer in Scripture, than that death is a punishment inflicted upon us for sin: so says the Apostle; "The wages of sin is death:" Rom. vi. 23: and, in another place; by sin, death entered into the world, and "death passed upon all, for that all have sinned:" ch. v. 12. From all which it follows, that, as Christ, taking upon him our sins, became thereby liable to death; so, having satisfied for our sins, and thereby having freed himself from the guilt that he lay under by imputation, he was no longer liable unto death, which is one part of the punishment he underwent: so that it could not have been agreeable to infinite justice, that Christ should have been held by death, who, by suffering death, had sustained the whole load of God's infinite wrath and displeasure, and fully satisfied for all those sins that were imputed to him; and therefore ought, in justice, to be acquitted from all penalties, and consequently from death.

iv. It was impossible that Christ should be held by death, IN RESPECT TO HIS OFFICE OF MEDIATORSHIP.

For, having as our mediator undertaken the desperate service of bringing sinful and fallen man to life and happiness, he must of necessity not only die, but rise again from the dead; without which, his death, and whatever else he did or suffered for us, would have been of no avail.

There are two things requisite, before any real or eternal benefit can become ours: viz., a *meritorious purchase*, procuring the thing itself for us; an *effectual application* of that benefit to us.

The purchase of mercy was made by the death of Christ, by which a full price was paid down to the justice of God: but the effectual application of mercy is by the life and resurrection of Christ. Wherefore, if Christ had only died, and not risen again: if he had not overcome death within its own empire, and triumphed over the grave in its own territories; it would have been to his disappointment, and not at all to our salvation. The loss of Christ's life would not have procured life for us, unless, as he laid it down with freedom, so he had again restored it with power: our hope of salvation otherwise would have been buried in the same grave with himself; unless what he died to procure, he lives to confer.

It was ignorance of Christ's resurrection from the dead, that so staggered the two disciples going to Emmaus; Luke xxiv. 18-21. They tell Christ himself a sad story of one Jesus of Nazareth, that was condemned and crucified; "who, while he lived among us, by his word and works testified himself to be the true Messiah: we little thought of his dying; and, when he told us of his death, he likewise foretold us of his resurrection the third day; and, behold, 'the third day' is already come, and yet there is no appearance of this Jesus. Verily, 'we trusted that it had been he, which should have redeemed Israel:' but now our hopes grow faint, and languish in us; for, certainly, there can be no redemption for Israel by him, who cannot redeem himself from death."

Nothing in the world did so much prejudice the gospel, and hinder its taking place in the hearts of the heathen in the primitive times, as the cross and death of Christ: for, believing that he was lifted up upon the cross, but not believing that he was raised up from the dead, they assented to their natural reason, which herein taught them, that it was folly to expect life from him, who could not either preserve or restore his own. It is true, it was folly thus to hope, but that his life applies what his death deserved; and our salvation begun on the cross, is perfected on the throne:

and therefore the Apostle tells us, that our faith in a crucified Saviour, and our obedience to him, is all vain, if he had not risen again from the dead: 1 Cor. xv. 17: for, unless he had risen from the dead, he could not have acquitted us from the guilt of sin because he could not have been justified himself. We are justified by the righteousness of Christ, as the Apostle speaks, in his Epistle to the Romans; Rom. iv. 25, which righteousness he wrought out for us, both by his perfect obedience to the law and by his submission to the punishment of the law; but, yet, this righteousness could not have availed to our justification, had he not, after fulfilling it, risen again from the dead; because he himself had not been justified, much less could we have been justified by one who could not have justified himself. And therefore we read, "Great is the mystery of godliness: God manifested in the flesh," in his incarnation; "justified in the Spirit," by his resurrection; "seen of angels," in his ascension: 1 Tim. iii. 16: had he not been raised and quickened by the Spirit, that is, by the glorious power of his divine nature, he had not been declared just, nor could he have justified us: for this declaration, that Christ was just, was made upon the resurrection of his body from the dead; by which he was set free from all those penalties due to our sins, that were imputed to him. If, therefore, the justification and salvation of sinners was a design laid by the infinite wisdom of God, it must needs follow, that it was impossible for Christ to be kept under death, because that would have obstructed their justification and salvation; and so would have brought a disappointment upon the infinite wisdom of God, which was impossible to be done: and therefore, consequently, Christ could not be held by death.

II. The APPLICATION of this great truth shall be briefly in these following inferences.

i. If it was impossible for Christ not to have risen from the dead, IT IS EVIDENT, THEN, THAT CHRIST IS THE TRUE MESSIAH.

For, had he been an impostor or false prophet, it would have been so far from an impossibility that he should not have been raised, that it would have been a very impossibility for him to have risen again: for, neither could he have raised himself, being mere man; neither would God have raised him, being a mere impostor and cheat. When, therefore, the Jews called for a sign from Christ to prove him to be the true Messiah, he gives them

the sign of his resurrection: Matt. xii. 38-40: "Master," say they, "we would see a sign from thee. But he answered and said unto them, An evil and adulterous generation seeketh after a sign; and there shall no sign be given to it, but the sign of the prophet Jonas; For, as Jonas was three days and three nights in the whale's belly; so shall the Son of Man be three days and three nights in the heart of the earth." So, again, when they tempted him at another time, for a sign of his being the Messiah, he still instances in his powerful resurrection from the dead: John ii. 18, 19. The Jews answered "and said unto him, What sign showest thou unto us, seeing that thou doest these things? Jesus answered and said unto them, Destroy this temple, and in three days I will raise it up." So that, still, he made his death and resurrection to be the infallible proof of his being the true Messiah.

ii. If it were necessary that Christ should rise from the dead and if he did do so, THEN, CERTAINLY, SIN IS CONQUERED.

For the sting of death, and that envenomed weapon whereby it wounds, yea kills the sinner, is sin; and, so long as death had this sting in it, it could not have been conquered by any sinner. It is sin, that gives death its power to hold fast all those, who come within its reach: which since it could not do with Christ, it is evident sin is subdued by Christ; who was in its arms and grasp, but yet came safe out from it, taking away the sting and weapon of death with him.

iii. If the resurrection of Christ be thus necessary, and hath been thus effectually accomplished, we may comfortably from thence conclude THE NECESSITY OF OUR OWN RESURRECTION.

For, the head being raised, the members shall not always sleep in the dust. Christ's mystical body shall certainly be raised, as well as his natural body; and every member of it shall be made forever glorious, with a glorious and triumphant head.

And, from each of these considerations, what abundant cause have we for joy and exultation! Of joy, in that his resurrection hath afforded us an irrefragable testimony to convince the world, that we have not misplaced our faith, our hope, our worship; since that Jesus whom we serve, was not only lifted up on the cross, but gloriously raised from the grave. Of joy, in that his resurrection is an infallible evidence to us, that the debt is paid, when the surety is discharged from the arrest: that now God's justice will

as well acquit us from our guilt, as his mercy; since it is not consistent with the rules and measures of justice, to punish the same offense in the principals, for which the surety hath fully satisfied. And, lastly, of joy, in that his resurrection is a most certain and assured pledge of ours: and that he hath risen before us, only to pluck us out of our graves; and is ascended into heaven before us only to prepare mansions for us, and, by the virtue of his resurrection and intercession, to lift us from the dust, to sit together with him in heavenly places.

And now, truly, the best way that I know to affect your hearts with joy for the resurrection of Jesus Christ, is, first to lead you to his cross and sepulcher. Let me say unto you, as the angel did to the woman, "Come, see the place where the Lord lay."

Behold him, first, in his death and sufferings. See the Lord upon the cross, pouring out his blood and his soul for you; and this will be a good help to heighten your joy, when you shall consider him risen again, and come triumphantly from under all his agonies and sorrows. This day exhibits Christ unto you, both bleeding and reigning, suffering and conquering, dying and reviving: all the glorious achievements of redemption are this day to be represented vividly to your faith and devotion; and as a messenger sent to you by Christ, I do, in his name, invite you to come and see your Lord, and mourn over him in the holy institution of his supper. I know we are apt to wish, that we had lived in the time of Christ's abode here upon earth; that we had been conversant with him, as his disciples were, to have seen both his miraculous actions, and his no less miraculous passion. Why, truly, the disciples' sight of these things hath no advantage at all above our faith. If we can but act faith in this ordinance, of which we are this day to partake, these things will be now present to us. There shall we see Christ crucified before our eyes; yea, and crucified as truly and really to our faith, as ever he was to the sense of others. This can carry us into the garden, and make us do more than they, even watch with him in his agonies. This can carry us, without being befriended by acquaintance, into the judgment-hall, to hear his whole trial and arraignment. This can lead us, with the multitude and crowd of people, to his cross; and, in this ordinance we may see his body broken and his blood poured out, and hear him crying, "It is finished," and see him at last give up the ghost. All this the holy sacrament doth as clearly represent to the eye of faith, as if it were now transpiring. Con-

sider: were there a sight to be represented, at which heaven, and earth, and hell itself, should stand amazed; wherein God himself should suffer, not only in the form of a servant, but in the condition of a malefactor; wherein the everlasting happiness of all mankind, from the first creation of the world to the final dissolution of it, should be transacted; in which you might see the venom and poisonous strength of all our sins wrung into one bitter cup, and that put into the hands of the Son of God to drink the very dregs of it; in which you might see the gates of hell broken to pieces, devils conquered, and all the powers of darkness: were there, I say, but such a sight as this, so dreadful and yet so glorious, to be now represented, would you not all desire to be spectators of it? Why, I invite you to it this day: only come, and come with faith, and you may see the Son of God slain, the blood of God incarnate poured out: you may see Him, who takes away transgressions, numbered himself among transgressors: you may see him hanging on the soreness and tenderness of his hands and feet; all our iniquities meeting upon him, and the eternity of divine wrath and vengeance contracted into a short space, and, as beams through a burning-glass, made more violent and scorching by that contraction. Come, therefore, and see, and let your eye affect your heart with deep and bitter sorrow, that ever you should embrue your hands in the blood of your Saviour, that ever you should be his executioners and murderers, that ever your sins and guilt should squeeze so much gall and wormwood into the bitter cup of his passion.

And, when you have thus wept over your dying Lord, let joy and gladness again fill your hearts, for he is risen: he is risen from death to life, from earth to heaven; by the one, to confirm our faith; by the other, to prepare our glory.

MISCELLANEOUS SERMONS.

VI.

A DISCOURSE ON THE STATE AND WAY OF SALVATION.

But, beloved, we are persuaded better things of you, and things that accompany salvation, though we thus speak. HEB. vi. 9.

INTRODUCTION.

BETTER things. Indeed, the Apostle had, in the foregoing verses, spoken very dreadful and fatal things, concerning some hypocritical and unsound professors. And his discourse concerning them may be reduced unto these three heads, viz., The high attainments of such professors. The wretched apostasy of such hypocrites. The fearful perdition of such apostates.

First. He discovers their attainments; and gives us, as it were, the *ultimum quod sic*, the highest strain and pitch to which such can reach.

First. They may be "enlightened," *i. e.*, baptized; and have a deep and searching knowledge into the mysteries of the gospel, so as clearly to understand them, and to unfold them perspicuously and demonstratively unto others.

Secondly. They may "have tasted of the heavenly gift." They may have some relish upon their spirits, of the excellence, sweetness, and preciousness of Jesus Christ, the greatest gift God ever gave to the world.

Thirdly. They may be "made partakers of the Holy Ghost," in his gifts; those *Χαρίσματα*, which were poured forth upon the Church. And those, both extraordinary; such as were then bestowed upon the primitive Church, as the gift of tongues, of prophecy, of working miracles: and also ordinary, in illumination; conviction; partial reformation; fluent elocution, both to God in prayer and to men in instruction: which still remain to this day, and are dispensed in common, both to those who are savingly wrought upon and to those who are utter strangers to the life of grace and the power of true godliness.

Fourthly. They may "have tasted the good word of God;" and may have found so much sweetness and comfort in the doctrine

and promises of it, as to hear it gladly with Herod, and to receive it joyfully with the stony ground.

Fifthly. They may have tasted of "the powers of the world to come;" and have had some foretastes of eternal glory, in some ecstatic raptures and transports of spirit, as if they were raised quite above mortality: and these foretastes may entertain them with fair and flourishing hopes, that they shall forever drink of those rivers of pleasure that flow at God's right hand.

These, you see, are great and high attainments, which the Apostle allows to *unsound professors*: vv. 4, 5. For that they were never otherwise, appears,

Secondly. In the defection and apostasy of these hypocrites from all these glorious attainments.

And this apostasy is not only gradual and partial; such as is too often incident to the best saints, who decline from the spirituality and excellence of their first ways: but total and final; ending in a malicious renunciation of the truth, and the profession of the name of Christ, which is the very formality of the unpardonable sin against the Holy Ghost. If such "shall fall away," it is impossible "to renew them again unto repentance:" v. 6, and therefore, it is alike impossible that ever they should be pardoned. For this conditional proposition, "if they fall away," supposeth a possibility of it; because the Apostle gives it both as a caution against security, and a motive to a farther progress and perfection. They may "fall," and "fall away," and fall away to an utter impossibility of renewing them again unto repentance.

Thirdly. He discovers the woeful perdition of these apostates.

And that he doth by an elegant similitude, taken from barren ground; to which such apostates are compared, v. 8. For, if God hath cultivated them, and caused the dew of heaven to fall plentifully upon them from his ordinances, and yet they bring forth nothing but briars and thorns, let them know that they lie under a most tremendous doom.

First. They are "rejected" of God; reprobated and hated of him. "If any man draw back, my soul shall have no pleasure in him:" Heb. x. 38.

Secondly. They are "nigh unto cursing." The dreadful curse of God hangs hovering over their heads; and, would they but look about them, they might see thick and black clouds gathering, and ready to break upon them and overwhelm them with a tempest of the divine wrath and fury, and they would live in a

certain fearful expectation of fiery indignation to devour and consume them.

Thirdly. Their "end is to be burned." They are cut out to be firebrands for hell; ordained of old unto this condemnation: who so long willfully withdraw from God, that they fall into the devil's arms; and recede so far backward from Christ and their seeming piety and splendid profession, that they tumble into everlasting fire; and there forever suffer the most acute tortures, the most direful plagues, that either the infinite wisdom of God can prepare, or the infinite power of God inflict; and lie eternally cursing and accursed, under the revenges of that God, whom they have maliciously despised.

But, lest any tender-hearted Christian should be discouraged and dejected by this terrible and startling doctrine; a doctrine, which might have then, and hath since, caused many sad fears to seize upon the spirits of those, who are true and sincere, but yet timorous and doubting saints; the Apostle comforts them in the words of my text: and tells them, that, though he had spoken so sharply against apostates, yet they should not apply it to themselves, as though he suspected them for such; that his discourse was directed unto them, not as censure, but as caution; not as judging them to be such, but forewarning them lest they should be such. As if he should say, "Interpret not what I have spoken as if I thought you forlorn and cursed apostates from Christ: these things do not appertain to you, otherwise than as a matter that deserves your care and caution: for, though I have propounded to you the danger of apostasy; yet I have great confidence in the sincerity of your profession; and the perseverance of your faith and obedience: "We are persuaded better things of you, and things that accompany salvation, though we thus speak."

From this connection of the words with the context, we may observe, that there is great need to preach awakening and terrifying doctrines, even to true and real believers. Thunder is said to purge the air; and to cleause it from those impure vapors, with which it is apt to abound when it hath been long serene and stagnant. And, truly, thundering doctrine is of great use,

First. Not only to convince the hypocrite: when the word shall be applied so critically, that he can no longer hide himself from the evidence of it, nor any longer lurk under the false disguise of seeming sanctity; but his own conscience will detect him, and

deal as roundly with him, as he hath dealt dissemblingly both with God and man: nor,

Secondly. To rouse and awaken the secure; and, by alarming them with the terrors of the Lord, make them start out of their supine recklessness, and stupid neglect of their souls and eternal interests: but,

Thirdly. It is necessary also to make those, who are true and sincere Christians, cautious and circumspect; to stand upon their watch, lest they also draw back unto perdition, and bring upon themselves all the woes and curses which they hear denounced against these wretched apostates: "Let him, that thinketh he standeth, take heed lest he fall:" 1 Cor. x. 12.

And, whereas the Apostle sweetens this terrible doctrine, by declaring his good hopes and opinion concerning them: observe,

That such awakening and terrifying truths require a great deal of holy prudence and caution in delivering them. Ministers ought not always to denounce woe and wrath; nor at all peradventures to fling abroad swords, arrows, and death; nor, like a company of buffoons in a show, spit fire at every man they meet. For this indiscreet preaching of hell and damnation, not making a careful distinction between persons and persons, only hardens the wicked, while it puts them into as good a condition as any others; grieves the good; and saddens the hearts of those, whom God would not have made sad—while it rattles out the terrors of the Lord, without any discrimination; and leaves them no means, nor advantage, of applying those comforts to themselves, which of right belong unto them—and prejudices all, inasmuch as it is apt to beget only a slavish fear; and that fear an aversion to God, and to that religion, which is thus imprudently represented as only dreadful and frightful.

But, to wave these things, that, which I shall principally consider, is that clause in the text, "things, that accompany salvation." In which I shall inquire (1) The meaning of the phrase. (2) What those things are, which do thus "accompany salvation."

For the meaning and import of the expression; we must here take notice, that "salvation" may be taken in a twofold sense: either, for the full and actual *possession* of it; or, for our *right* and *title* to it, and some earnest of it already given to us.

In the former sense, it signifies the glory and happiness of the saints in heaven, when they are no longer *viatores*, but *comprehen-*

sors ; no longer travelers thither, but possessors of their inheritance. And thus it is not to be understood in this place. For many things accompany this salvation, which cannot be verified of the best and holiest saints, while they are here in this life: as, the clear and immediate vision and fruition of God; our perfect immunity from all sin and corruption; our final deliverance from all sorrows and sufferings, and the like: which the choicest believers do not enjoy, while they are here on earth; but they are reserved for them till they arrive at heaven, to be the completion of all their hopes, and their full and eternal reward.

This "salvation" then, which the text mentions, is only salvation in right and title: for then also are we said to be saved, when we have a right unto the eternal inheritance, and the beginnings of it are wrought in our souls. This is a salvation on this side heaven: which we may well call a state of salvation, or a certain tendency unto it; which will, at last, infallibly end in a full and entire enjoyment of it. Now all those things, which are previous and antecedent to our eternal salvation in heaven, are concomitants and associates with this salvation: and therefore are said to "accompany salvation," because they are to be found in all those, who have a true right unto the glory of heaven for the present, and shall be brought unto the possession of it hereafter. Hence observe,

That a STATE OF SALVATION HATH PROPER AND PECULIAR THINGS BELONGING UNTO IT, WHICH ARE NOT TO BE FOUND IN ANY OTHER CONDITION.

I. NEGATIVELY:

i. These things ARE NOT ONLY EXTERNAL PRIVILEGES, NOR THE DISPENSATION OF THE ORDINANCES OF JESUS CHRIST.

Indeed, these are ordinarily necessary as the means of salvation, without which none can, according to God's ordinary way of working, come to the knowledge of the truth and be saved: for "faith cometh by hearing, and hearing by the word of God:" Rom. x. 17. But they are not inseparable concomitants of this state: many enjoy the ordinances and means of grace, who yet are utter strangers to God; and despise that grace, which they were instituted to convey. And, therefore, as they prove great furtherances to the salvation of some, so they accidentally prove the occasion of hardening and sorer condemnation to others: as the same rain from heaven rots some trees, that makes others sprout and grow;

so the same ordinances do incidentally rot and corrupt some wretched souls, and make them the fitter fuel for hell-fire, which cause others, that are trees of righteousness and plants of renown, to flourish, and spring, and bring forth much precious fruit unto God. And therefore we find, that God gives a most sad and dreadful commission to his prophet Isaiah, ch. vi. 9: "Go and tell this people, Hear ye indeed, but understand not; and see ye indeed, but perceive not. Make the heart of this people fat, and make their ears heavy, and shut their eyes; lest they see with their eyes, and hear with their ears, and understand with their heart, and convert, and be healed."

Rest not, therefore, in ordinances: that you hear the word, and receive the sacraments; that you have the tenor of the covenant explained, and the seals of it applied. These are, indeed, means of grace; but they are not evidences of it: they are things, which promote salvation; but they do not necessarily "accompany" it: and he, who hath no better a title for heaven, than only that he sits under the enjoyment of these, will find all his fond hopes miserably disappointed, when he shall hear Christ pronounce a dreadful doom, even upon those, who have eaten and drunk in his presence, and whom he himself had taught and instructed: "Depart from me, all ye workers of iniquity."

ii. THE COMMON GIFTS OF THE SPIRIT OF GOD, are not those "things, that accompany salvation."

These, indeed, are of great use and excellence; but they may be found in those, who are wholly devoid of true grace and the life of God. Many hypocrites may be endowed with a great measure of these gifts; and, sometimes, much beyond those, who are true and sincere Christians. Their gifts may further the salvation of others, when they only aggravate their own damnation. As Noah made use of those to build his ark, who yet were themselves drowned in the deluge; and as Solomon employed the Syrians, who were heathens, to prepare materials for the temple: so God doth, sometimes, make use of the gifts and abilities of wicked and ungodly men for the benefit and salvation of his Church. Yet, those very parts and gifts, which help on the salvation of others, contribute not to the salvation of the owners; but rather to the increase of their future torments, because their knowledge, and gifts, and parts, render them the more inexcusable before God.

iii. THE COMMON GRACES OF THE HOLY GHOST, are not those "things that accompany salvation."

There are many previous works wrought upon the souls of those, who are brought near unto salvation; but, through their quenching the Spirit and resisting his motions, they provoke him to withdraw, and so they never attain it.

iv. INWARD JOYS AND COMFORTS are not those "things, that" do necessarily "accompany salvation."

Nay, indeed, a true Christian may, many times, go mourning and heavily, when a hypocrite shall flaunt and triumph in his joys; and boast of his evidences, and raptures, and overpowering consolations, as if he were the only favorite of heaven, whom God delighted to caress as the darling of his affections. See that proud Pharisee, Luke xviii. 11: "God, I thank thee, that I am not as other men are.....or even as this publican:" and that hypocritical Church of Thyatira: Rev. iii. 17: "I am rich, and increased in goods, and have need of nothing." Thus, through the delusions of Satan and their own self-flattery, they may bring themselves into a golden dream, that they are rich in enjoyments, increased in graces, and stand in need of nothing which might make them either holy or happy; and so they give themselves the same applause, that the rich fool gave his soul; "Soul, thou hast.....goods laid up for many years, take thine ease, eat, drink, and be merry:" Luke xii. 19. But, alas! these overweening conceits prove gross delusions! How many have we seen, who have prided themselves in their joys, and would be still boasting what sweetness of spirit, and soul delights, and other such like melting things they have felt, turn utter apostates from the truth, and the profession of godliness!

These, therefore, are not the "things, that accompany salvation:" but a man may suffer everlasting torments, who hath tasted many delusive joys and comforts: he may drink deep of the cup of God's wrath and fury, who hath tasted of the power of the world to come: he may go down to hell with many Church privileges and ordinances, excellent gifts and parts, with many common graces of the Spirit, many convictions, many good wishes and desires, yea and many good duties too, and there suffer the vengeance of everlasting fire, and have all these burnt about him.

These things, therefore, are no firm support for your hope: no good evidences for your future happiness: and, therefore, trust not

your souls upon them : they will sink under you, and deceive you. They are only common things ; and may belong to any, who live under gospel dispensations. Hearing, praying, professing, receiving the sacraments, though they be absolutely necessary to salvation, as means ; yet they are not, as evidences : they are distinguishing marks of Christians from those of another religion ; but they are not distinguishing marks of saints from hypocrites. Or, if you will have them evidences, they are rather exclusive evidences, than conclusive : that is, it is an assured evidence that they are no true Christians, who do neglect, or disown, or despise these things : whosoever doth so, is certainly excluded from this number, and from all hopes and possibility of salvation. But they are not conclusive evidences : we cannot certainly conclude, that such a man is a true Christian, or in the state of salvation, because such things may be found upon him.

II. And, therefore, in the next place, let us see **WHAT THESE THINGS ARE, THAT DO ACCOMPANY SALVATION.**

They are (i.) certain principles of faith in the understanding ; (ii.), certain gracious impressions upon the heart and will ; and (iii.), a certain regular obedience in the whole course of a man's life and conversation.

And in regard to each of these, we must discover what those principles, impressions, and acts of obedience are, and whether we hold, experience, and perform them in a saving manner.

i. The **FIRST** sort of "things, that accompany salvation," are

1. *Divine principles of truth in the understanding.*

And these are of two kinds ; either doctrinal, or practical : those, whose immediate tendency is information of the judgment ; or those, whose immediate effect is to influence and regulate our lives and practice.

(1) Doctrinal principles, are absolutely necessary to salvation.

Such, I mean, as are the vital and fundamental articles of the Christian faith. It is true, it is not necessary for every private Christian to employ his mind about the nice and curious questions of religion, which have always been disputed ; but will never be decided, until our imperfect knowledge give place to perfect. Some things in the Christian religion are ornamental ; and such are

the more abstruse points, which are not so clearly revealed to us in the Scriptures. Into these, indeed, those, who are able and have competent leisure, ought to search, as the noblest study and science about which they can employ themselves. Other things are fundamental and vital, the ignorance of which excludes men from all possibility of salvation: and these we ought to know and believe explicitly; as being truths, which are most clearly revealed to us. And such are the following:

[1] *The doctrine of the ever-blessed Trinity*: that there is one infinite essence, in three distinct Persons.

A mystery, far beyond all the comprehension of reason, and far deeper than the longest line of our understanding can possibly fathom; yet we are bound to adore and believe what we cannot comprehend: yea, and thus far reason itself teacheth us, that such a being cannot be God, which may be comprehended by man. This mystery of Three in One the Scripture hath expressly declared to us: 1 John v. 7. "There are three that bear record in heaven, the Father, the Word, and the Holy Ghost: and these three are one:" they are "one," not only in their record and testimony, as some heretics would gloss the place to evade the clear force of it; but in essence, being, power, nature, and all the divine attributes and perfections: for, were this unity only in testimony, it might well be wondered why the Apostle should, in the very next verse, alter the phrase, and there tell us, that "the Spirit, and the water, and the blood, agree in one:" here, it is evident, from the manner of expression, that these are "one" only in testimony; but, when it is said, of "the Father," and "the Word," (that is, Jesus Christ, that "Word" which "was made flesh,") and the "Spirit," not that they "agree in one," but that they "are one," it can bear no other signification, but that they are one infinite, eternal, ever-blessed essence, having all the same essential properties and perfections. How far the express belief of this great truth was necessary before the incarnation of our Saviour, I will not now dispute; though sufficient evidences are not wanting that it was known to the Jews then: but, since our obligation to believe a truth is proportionable to the evidence that can be produced for it: therefore now, since the Scripture is express in this particular, an explicit belief of it is necessary to us, whatsoever it were to them: yea, so far necessary in order to eternal life, that he, who denieth and opposeth it, cannot worship the true God, who is three in one; cannot worship the Lord Jesus Christ, who is truly and verily God as he is man; and therefore cannot be in any capacity of obtaining salvation. For it is the highest idolatry in

the world, to worship that for our God, which is not so: now our God is three in one; and therefore they, who pretend to worship him, whom yet they deny to be so, do but worship an idol of their own fancy, and not the true God. Yea, our Saviour Jesus Christ makes this to be a fundamental article of our faith: John xvii. 3. "This is life eternal, that they might know thee, the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom thou hast sent:" so that, if we know not God, as he is the true God, we cannot have eternal life; but as he is the true God, so he is three persons in one nature and essence. But some may say, "This seems rather to make against it: for, if the Father be 'the only true God,' then how can Jesus Christ be the true God too?" To this I answer, that the particle "only" refers not to the Father, but to the "true God:" now the word "God" is an essential, and not a personal title; and so both God the Father is "the only true God," and God the Son is "the only true God," and God the Holy Ghost is "the only true God," because they are all one and the same "only true God:" our Saviour saith not that only the Father is the true God, but the Father is "the only true God:" and so also is each person in the ever-blessed Trinity; for the Godhead is not divided with the persons, and therefore there is the Father, the Son, and the Spirit, but these are all "the only true God."

[2] Another principle, consequent upon the former, is the knowledge and belief of that great mystery of *the two natures united in one person of our Lord Jesus Christ.*

This is, likewise, a fundamental truth: truth, as to both parts of it; both that he is God, and that he is man. This we find most clearly asserted by the Apostle, Rom. i. 3, 4. "Jesus Christ, our Lord, who was made of the seed of David according to the flesh, and declared to be the Son of God with power, according to the Spirit of holiness, by the resurrection from the dead." His divinity is most irrefragably proved, past all the cunning evasions of Socinian perverseness, in many places of Scripture; but, especially, in the first to the Hebrews, v. 8. "Unto the Son he saith, Thy throne, O God, is forever and ever:" and, vv. 10, 11, 12, speaking of the same Son, "Thou, Lord, in the beginning hast laid the foundation of the earth; and the heavens are the works of thy hands: they shall perish, but thou remainest.....they shall be changed: but thou art the same, and thy years shall not fail:" not to mention v. 3. "Who being the brightness of his glory, and the express image of his" (the Father's) "person, and upholding all things by the word of his power:" nor v. 2. "By whom also he made the worlds." Where,

I think, we may challenge all the wit of hell to evade the force of this argument. He, certainly, is "the only true God," who is God the Creator: for "he, that made all things, is God," saith the Apostle, Heb. iii. 4: but so is the Lord Jesus Christ, as these places do abundantly testify; and therefore he is true God, a God by nature and essence, and not only by authority and derivation. Again, if Jesus Christ ought to be served and worshiped by us, then certainly he is a God by nature; but none, who acknowledge the name of Christ, excepting that accursed Blandatra and a few of his adherents, will deny that he ought to be worshiped, whom all the angels in heaven are commanded to worship, Heb. i. 6. "Let all the angels of God worship him:" therefore he must needs be God by nature, and not by office only. See, for this, Gal. iv. 8, where the Apostle tells the believing Galatians, that heretofore, when they were Gentiles, they "did service unto them, which by nature are no gods;" implying, that they were guilty of most gross and stupid idolatry in so doing: but, if Christ be not God by nature, either the Apostle commanded these believers to worship him, or not: if not, then they ought not to worship him; and very choice Christians they are, who should be driven to this: if he did, then he commanded them to be guilty of idolatry, like their former; for he tells them they were idolaters, in worshiping those, who by nature are not gods.

And, that to own both natures in Christ is a fundamental article of faith, appears,

1st. In that to deny the human nature in Christ, is expressly sentenced as damnable.

1 John iv. 3. "Every spirit, that confesseth not that Jesus Christ is come in the flesh, is not of God: and this is that spirit of antichrist, whereof ye have heard that it should come; and even now already is it in the world." The Apostle doth not say, "Every spirit, that confesseth not that Jesus Christ is *come into the world*;" to prevent the evasion of those heretics, who pretended that he was revealed in the spirit, or in the conscience, or in the gospel: but he saith, "*come in the flesh*," in the assumption of a true human nature: those, who deny this, are not of God. And,

2dly. Because to deny his Divine nature, that also is in itself damnable.

1 John ii. 22: "He is antichrist; that denieth the Father and the Son." And, certainly, if it be so damnable a heresy to deny the humanity of Christ, much more then his Divinity; for it was his divine nature, that put worth and value into all the actions and

sufferings of his human, and made them truly meritorious: and, therefore, if there be no salvation attainable, but through faith in the merits of Jesus Christ; they are utterly excluded from all possibility of being saved, who destroy the very belief of those merits through which alone they can be saved.

[3] *Justification*, in a free gratuitous way, in opposition to the works of the law, is a fundamental article of our faith.

In confirming this, the Apostle spends eleven whole chapters in his epistle to the Romans. The denial of this doctrine is utterly inconsistent with a state of salvation. See, for this, Gal. v. 4: "Whosoever of you are justified by the law, Christ is become of no effect unto you: ye are fallen from grace." Indeed, many learned men are at variance concerning the manner of obtaining justification by the righteousness of Christ; some taking one way and some another, and it is no easy matter to reconcile and harmonize them: but, so long as they hold this foundation, that none can be accepted by God, but only through the merits and righteousness of Jesus Christ; though some may build hay or stubble upon this foundation, they may be safe, though they suffer loss in their superstructure. Only to me, that seems the best and safest way, which makes most for the honor of our Lord Jesus Christ; for we cannot easily err in ascribing too much unto him, who is the Author of our salvation: and therefore, certainly, to make the merits and righteousness of Jesus Christ the very matter of our justification, and the imputation of them to us the formal cause of it, seems more honorable to him, and, I think, more consonant with Scripture, than only to make it a remote exciting cause, moving God to accept our faith and obedience, as our righteousness, and thereupon to justify us.

[4] The doctrine of *sanctification*, and of the absolute necessity of a thorough change and renovation of our natures, is a fundamental truth, without the belief of which, we can never be saved.

For our Saviour hath told us, John iii. 5: "Except a man be born of water and of the Spirit, he cannot enter into the kingdom of God." And, certainly, if to be the subject of a change so thorough and universal is of such absolute necessity, the knowledge and belief of it must needs be so too; for, if we believe it not necessary, we shall never be engaged heartily to experience it. And, therefore,

[5] *The doctrine of our fall*, the knowledge of our lost estate and condition, is of indispensable necessity to eternal salvation.

Our Saviour tells us, that he came "to seek and to save that

which was lost:" Luke xix. 10: and unless we are conscious of our sin, and misery by reason of sin; that we stand forfeited to the divine justice, liable to his severest wrath, exposed to all the dreadful curses of the law; we shall never submit to the methods of our physician, when we are not sensible of our disease.

[6] The doctrines of the *resurrection, judgment to come, heaven and hell*, and *eternal rewards appportioned to our present works*; these are fundamental articles, and of absolute necessity to be believed.

For he, who shall deny these, destroys all hopes and fears; and turns himself loose to follow his own lusts, without any check or control. He cannot be in a possibility of salvation, who believeth none; who expects nothing at God's hands, whether rewards or punishments. For such a damnable doctrine as this, will necessarily engage him in a wicked and profligate life: in this our corrupt estate, wherein we are so naturally prone to sin, it is impossible that men should be holy *gratis*. Besides, it plucks up all religion by the very roots; and the whole doctrine of Christ falls to the ground, if the immortality of the soul, future judgment, and eternal rewards, be once denied: for both our religion, and all religions in the world, are founded upon these principles.

Thus you see some of those fundamental truths, which are necessary to salvation. And, therefore, though heresy look not so foul and ugly, as some vile and scandalous impieties in life and practice; and we are apt to have good opinions of men, whatsoever they hold, if so be we see them just and honest in their dealings, sober and temperate in their conduct; though we think it no great matter what their notions and tenets be, so long as their lives are blameless and inoffensive: yet, believe it, heresy is altogether as damnable as profaneness: those poisons are as deadly, which work upon the head; as those, which work upon the heart: and we ought as much to shun a heretic, and to refuse fellowship with him, as a wicked monster; as we ought to shun a murderer, a thief, a drunkard, an unclean sensualist, or the vilest sinner that can be named: yes, and rather more, inasmuch as there is more danger of being corrupted by the fair speeches of erroneous persons, than there is of being enticed by the lewd and hateful actions of notorious and abandoned wretches: and therefore St. John gives us this command, in his second epistle, verses 10, 11: "If there come any unto you, and bring not this doctrine, receive him not into your house, neither bid him God speed: for he, that biddeth him God speed, is partaker of his evil deeds."

(2) In addition to the doctrinal principles just noticed, there are *practical principles* of truth, whose immediate influence is only to guide the life and conversation.

Many such there are, which I shall only reckon to you in a body, not enlarging upon them in detail. They are as follows: that the word of God is the best rule of life: that godliness is the greatest gain: that sin is the worst of evils: that God, in Christ, is the chief good: that a holy life is the sweetest and most secure: that we ought to look only to duty, and leave successes to God: that the best peace is peace of conscience: that self-denial is the greatest self-interest: that we ought to choose the greatest affliction, rather than to commit the least sin: that whatsoever we lay out or lose for Christ, shall be repaid us with abundant use and advantage. These, and many other such like, are practical truths, of which, unless we are fully persuaded and convinced in our own consciences, we shall never be able to influence and govern our lives and actions. And, unless we live according to such rules as these, it is utterly impossible, that ever we should be saved.

2. The second inquiry was, How we shall know, whether these principles, both doctrinal and practical, *are embraced by us in such a way, as may give us good hopes, that we are in a state of salvation.*

Indeed, it is not enough merely to know these things, or to believe that they are great and precious truths: for there are not many, who have lived long under the dispensation of the gospel, but have acquired some knowledge of these things, and their very reason forceth them to subscribe to the truth of them: yet we see that multitudes, even of these, are profane and impious; and such ungodly persons, that as the Psalmist speaks, "Salvation is far from them." Therefore, I answer,

(1) Then these principles are things accompanying salvation, when they are *leading principles.*

When a man sails by this compass, and steers his course according to them: when they lie not floating and swimming in the brain; but sink into the heart, and influence the life.

(2) When they are *determining and conquering principles.*

When Christ and our interest come into competition, then see by which thou art determined. A carnal man may discourse by Scripture principles: but, when a time of trial and temptation comes, and he and Christ must part or he and the world must part, he then determines his choice by worldly principles; and, whatever he had speculatively talked before of preferring the

peace and purity of conscience before all worldly enjoyments, yet now he chooseth sin rather than affliction.

(3) When they are *quieting principles*.

When they have determined your choice and then can satisfy and quiet your minds, then are they saving. It may be, that sometimes conscience hath well determined, and doth sway a man to a good choice: but yet he is angry with it; and could curse his conscience for being so tender, and forcing him to forego his earthly interests.

(4) When they are *fixed principles*; not only in the assent of the judgment, but in the consent of the will.

When they become habitual to us, and grow up in us as another nature: that, as the great natural principle of all our natural actions is self-preservation, so the great swaying principle of all our actions is these holy maxims, which naturally lead us to the preservation of that, which is our dearest self, even our precious souls and their eternal interests and concerns.

ii. Let us now proceed to the second general head: to consider THOSE IMPRESSIONS, WHICH MUST BE WROUGHT UPON THE HEART, WILL, AND AFFECTIONS.

And herein I shall, as before, make these two inquiries: 1. What those impressions are, "that accompany salvation," and, 2. What are the evidences, by which we know them to be saving.

1. *What these impressions are.*

(1) To this I answer, in general, they are those habits of true and divine grace infused into the will and affections, by the power of the Holy Spirit, whereby they are wholly renewed, and, instead of being earthly and sensual, become heavenly and spiritual.

They do, indeed, comprehend all the lineaments and features of the image of God: so that, when we speak of the graces of faith, love, hope, patience, humility, self-denial, &c., these are those impressions and habits, wrought in the heart, "that accompany salvation;" and the whole system and complexion of them taken together, is that, which the Scripture calls the new man, the new creature, the image of God, the divine nature, conversion, sanctification, effectual calling, and the like. And this great change must, of necessity, pass upon the soul, before it can be brought into a capacity of obtaining heaven and eternal salvation: for that God, whom the prophet describes to be "of purer eyes than to behold iniquity," will not certainly behold it in heaven, his own throne and palace: but, as all, who were unclean, and leprous,

and ulcerated, were to be removed out of the camp of Israel, because God walked in the midst of it; so shall all such spiritually unclean persons be excluded out of heaven, the palace of the great King, the camp of innumerable hosts of angels, in the midst of whom the holy God walks, and converses only with pure and holy spirits.

These holy habits of grace, which are infused into the soul in its new birth and renovation, "accompany salvation" as preparations for it, or as parts of it.

[1] As *preparations* for it.

For, as God hath prepared an inheritance of glory for us, hereafter; so, by grace, he prepares us for that inheritance. And therefore the Apostle, Col. i. 12, gives thanks to God, who "hath made us meet to be partakers of the inheritance of the saints in light." And this meetness is twofold:

1st. In the *nature* of the thing.

Holiness is naturally required unto eternal happiness. As all the goodness of fruits and flowers must first spring from some seminal virtue; so glory springs from grace, salvation from conversion, as the flower from the seed. Whence the Psalmist expresseth it, "Light is sown for the righteous, and gladness for the upright in heart:" Ps. cxvii. 11. And, as naturally as a small seed, when it is received into good ground and watered with the dew and refreshing showers of heaven, sprouts up, and spreads itself into the beauties of a flower; so this seed of grace, when it is watered with the dew of heaven and called forth by the quickening influences of the Spirit of God, begins to bud forth, spreads its branches, and will at last display all its glories when it is perfect and fully expanded in heaven.

2dly. By the *divine appointment*.

God hath, by his promises, entailed happiness and salvation upon the graces and holiness of his saints. It is a reward due unto them, by virtue of his promise and covenant. So that they are meet to be partakers of this inheritance; not only because grace doth naturally tend to glory, as naturally as the dawning of the morn tends to a noonday brightness; but because also it is a meet and just thing with God, to recompense unto them joy and refreshing and everlasting peace and bliss, having obliged himself so to do by the tenor of his unalterable word of promise.

And, as holiness is thus preparatory to salvation, so,

[2] It is *part* of salvation.

It is happiness, in this vale of misery: it is heaven, on this side

heaven. Grace and glory differ not in nature, but only in degrees: grace is glory begun; and glory is but grace elevated to its acme and perfection. St. John, in his first epistle, ch. iii. v. 2., tells us, that all we can know of the state of glory, is, that "we shall be like" God. "It doth not yet appear what we shall be: but we know, that, when he shall appear, we shall be like him; for we shall see him as he is." And this resemblance to God, the saints do here, in some measure, bear upon them: there are some outlines, some lineaments and proportions, of their Father's image, drawn upon them: and, as the clear and immediate vision of God in heaven is a transforming vision, where, by the bright reflections of God's purity and holiness cast upon the blessed, they are made perfectly holy, and therefore blessed; so, here on earth, those more obscure and glimmering discoveries, which God vouchsafeth of himself, when he passeth before them in his ordinances, though they see him but darkly through a glass, yet even this sight of God is also transforming, and changeth the soul into the likeness and image of God; as the Apostle speaks, 2 Cor. iii. 18: "We..... beholding as in a glass the glory of the Lord, are changed into the same image from glory to glory.....as by the Spirit of the Lord." So that, you see, there is very little difference between our present state of grace and our future state of glory, except in degrees and measures. St. John speaks of it as the glory of heaven, that we shall see God: St. Paul tells us, that we do now see him, though more dimly and obscurely. St. John tells us, that the glory of heaven consists, not only in seeing God, but in being made like unto him: St. Paul, that the sight of the glory of God doth now transform us, and make us like unto him, for we "are changed into the same image from glory to glory:" *i. e.*, from one degree of grace to another.

(2) And now, though this be most true, in general, concerning all the graces of God's Spirit, that they do thus naturally and necessarily "accompany salvation;" yet give me leave to single out some of the more choice and eminent ones, upon which the Scripture seems to set a peculiar distinction. For, though all the graces of the Holy Ghost are alike necessary to salvation, yet they are not alike eminent and conspicuous.

Now with divers of these, our Lord's most excellent Sermon on the Mount will furnish us.

[1] Holiness of heart is a gracious disposition of soul, that doth accompany salvation.

So we have it, Matt. v. 8: "Blessed are the pure in heart: for

they shall see God." Now as all holiness signifies nothing else, but a separation from profane uses, to the service of God; so this holiness of the heart is the alienation and separation of it from sin, to the service of God. The Apostle, 2 Cor. vii. 1, distinguisheth sins into two sorts: there are pollutions "of the flesh;" and such are those wherein the body is engaged; as drunkenness, riot, uncleanness, murder, oaths, and blasphemies, which require the service of the body as the instrument to perpetrate them: and there are other defilements "of the spirit;" and those are more refined and invisible, though not less pernicious and damnable sins; and such are wicked thoughts, evil longings and desires, atheism, unbelief, hypocrisy, and the like: the former sort are the sins of lewd and profligate wretches; these latter sort are the sins, in which formal hypocrites, and all those who are devoid of the power and life of true godliness, may indulge themselves, though they carry a fair show and outside to the world. Now examine yourselves: of which kind is your holiness and sanctity? Do not content yourselves that you are pure and clean from the gross and scandalous acts of sin? That you are no drunkards, nor swearers, nor adulterers, nor murderers, nor thieves, nor extortioners? It were to be wished that more could say, they have washed their hands in innocency from these wickednesses. But do you rest in this only; and look no farther, than that your lives and outward demeanor be fair and inoffensive; when, all the while, these and many other swarms of lusts crowd thick about your heart, and cluster there? Though thou never imbruedst thy hands in the blood of thy brother; yet dost thou harbor any malicious and revengeful thoughts against him? Dost thou please and delight thyself in wishing and fancying his ruin, and rejoicing in his sufferings? Though thou never spakest a blasphemous word against God and his truth; yet is it the employment of thy mind, to rend God's attributes from him, and to tear them off one by one, sometimes denying his wisdom, sometimes his power, sometimes his goodness, sometimes his providence, and sometimes, with the fool, denying the very being and essence of God itself? Is this the sport and recreation of thy mind, thus speculatively to assassinate the great God? Darest thou prostitute thy soul to the embraces of any unclean and impure thoughts, and defile the images of thine own fancy? Is thy heart vain, worldly, sensual; or dost thou suffer unclean, covetous, and revengeful thoughts to revel there without control? Believe it, though thy life were as clear and spotless as an angel's, yet this impurity and filthiness of

thy heart will keep thee forever from the beatific vision of God : for that God, who sees all the inward and lurking defilement of thy heart as apparently as if every thought and motion of thy soul were written on thy forehead, hath sentenced thee that thou shalt never see him. It may be, thou darest not outwardly commit that wickedness to which thy heart prompts thee, for fear of punishment or shame ; but God hath no interest at all in these restraints : if thou fearedst him, thou wouldst no more harbor any abomination in thy heart, than thou wouldst visibly act it in thy life ; for God sees every flushing of thy thoughts and of thy desires, as clearly as he doth the most public and conspicuous actions of thy life : it is not therefore for his sake, that thou art not notoriously and infamously wicked ; but for thine own : thou compoundest between thy reputation and the temptation : to satisfy thy credit, thou darest not commit the sin ; and yet, to satisfy the devil, thou wilt inwardly harbor and cherish it : and, believe it, he is well enough content that thou shouldst thus compromise ; knowing, that such repellents will never cure the disease, but only drive it to the heart ; and so that he may rule that, he will let thy credit or safety rule thy life. But, a true Christian rests not contented with this external sanctification ; that he hath beaten sin within its trenches ; that he lays a close siege to it, and keeps it from foraging abroad : but he especially labors with his heart ; knowing, that it is but in vain to bail out the streams, unless he can withal dry up the fountain : and, if he sees but the least stirring of any evil thought, the least breathing of any sinful desire, he presently endeavors to suppress it ; knowing, that if he can but keep his heart pure, his life will be pure by consequence. And this inward purity is that, which infallibly “accompanies salvation.” Indeed, he cannot altogether keep himself from the mutinies and rebellions of his carnal part : his thoughts and his affections will sometimes make an insurrection, and drive him to do strange things ; and sometimes also the devil casts in a fiery dart, some black and hideous suggestion, and that old serpent seems audibly to hiss within him : but, then, first, it is the grief and anguish of his soul when it is thus within him ; he could even shake off his very being, and run away from himself, to be freed from them : and, secondly, he labors to the very utmost of his power to quell these rebellious motions ; he commands his thoughts never again to propose such matters to him, turns away in indignation from hearkening to their overtures ; and, as other commanders use to do with seditious and mutinous armies, presently

busies them about other work and employment. Whereas, on the contrary, a wicked man diverts and recreates himself with indulgence of his impure thoughts, sets up a theater in his imagination, brings forth every lust to act its part, sports himself with them: and, when he hath done, applauds himself in the secrecy of his invention; that he can be a spectator, where none can behold him; and enjoy both his own lusts and other men's esteem, without ever considering that the all-seeing eye of God is upon him, of that God, who will draw the curtain, detect the scene, and openly expose all his secret sins to everlasting shame and reproach.

[2] *Poverty of spirit* is another grace, which accompanies salvation.

Matt. v. 3. "Blessed are the poor in spirit: for theirs is the kingdom of heaven." And what a rich portion, what a glorious inheritance is this, for those, who are thus poor! There is, indeed, a spiritual poverty which is far from having a blessing annexed to it: such was that of the Church of Laodicea, Rev. iii. 17: "And knowest not that thou art wretched, and miserable, and poor, and blind, and naked:" this spiritual poverty is always joined with ignorance and presumption; and those, who are most indigent and necessitous, usually flatter themselves with proud conceits of their fullness and abundance. But this blessed poverty of spirit is that grace, whereby a man is convinced of his wants, and mourns under them; sees his own emptiness and vileness, and loathes himself for them; and, therefore, continually renounceth himself in all that is really virtuous and commendable in him, and daily prays that his own righteousness may not condemn him: he maintains the performance, but abjures the merit of good works: he trusts not to his duties, but dares not neglect them: he knows they are but as broken reeds; and that, therefore, though he must walk with them in his hand to point him out the way unto heaven, yet he must not lean upon them: he is continually in want, and still complaining and craving: he sees nothing in himself but wants; want of wisdom, want of grace, want of holiness, want of comfort and assurance: ever since the strong man was cast out and his goods spoiled, he hath lived in great want and necessity; and therefore is a most constant and importunate beggar at the throne of grace for supply; and makes out to the fullness and all-sufficiency of Jesus Christ, as his only relief; and whatsoever he finds defective in himself, bringeth it home by an appropriating faith from him. This poverty of spirit is a most excellent grace, which puts the crown wholly upon God's mercy; ascribing nothing to itself, but its own failings: and is such a sweet, ingenuous, and obliging grace, that it wins favor in the sight of

God; and he will certainly crown it, at the last, with glory: this, above all others, hath learnt the true art of ingratiating itself with God; while those, who are spiritually proud and haughty and self-confident, are like your great mountains, high but barren; they are swollen up with their own arrogance, but are usually void of every thing except noise and pretension.

[3] *A mourning frame of spirit* is another disposition, which accompanies salvation.

Matt. v. 4. "Blessed are they that mourn: for they shall be comforted:" a holy mourning, for our own sins, and for the sins of others.

1st. For our own sins.

And this is one great part of repentance: without which, no remission can be granted; and therefore no salvation be obtained. It is true, repentance is no satisfaction to the justice of God: we cannot weep ourselves out of debt: were our heads "fountains of tears," and could our eyes pour out "rivers of water," yet all these could not wash away the guilt or stain of the least sin, that ever we committed. Yet, without this, the satisfaction, which Christ Jesus hath made, can never be applied to us: for his blood comes flowing to us, only upon a stream of our own tears: and that soul, which can thus melt down before the Lord in a holy, ingenuous mourning, and godly sorrow, may, with comfortable evidence conclude, that, as he hath bathed himself in his own tears, so God hath sprinkled him with the blood of Christ, which alone can take away sin. And,

2dly. A spirit of mourning for the sins of others; the sins of the times and places, in which we live.

For, as our own sins lie upon us, till we humble our souls before God: so the guilt of other men's sins will likewise be imputed unto us, and the wrath which is due to them may fall upon us; unless we lament them before God, and testify, by our sorrow for them, that we gave not our consent to them.

[4] Another is a *meek* and a *patient spirit*.

Matt. v. 5. "Blessed are the meek: for they shall inherit the earth:" where the promise, I suppose, doth not only refer to temporal blessings, though they only are expressed; but is to be carried higher, unto the heavenly inheritance. Now this meekness is a fruit of holy mourning: he, who deeply humbles himself for his sins before God, will not be much exasperated by the offenses of others against him: if God hath forgiven him ten thousand talents, he will not think it any great matter to forgive his brother a few

pence. Nothing makes a man so untractable and rugged, as sin, that lies upon the conscience unrepented of, and therefore unpardoned. And therefore we find that David was never so cruel, as when he had for some time lain under the guilt of his two foul sins: then, he puts the Ammonites "under saws, and under harrows of iron, and under axes of iron, and made them pass through the brick-kiln:" 2 Sam. xii. 31: a fearful and sad havoc! some he burnt, and some he sawed, and some he tore in pieces; which was a strange execution, and possibly more than became him to inflict. But, afterward, when he had truly repented and deeply humbled himself for his sins, though he had a far greater provocation, yet he meekly passeth it by; and when Shimei, in the madness and distraction of his rage, pelts him with stones and curses together, repentance has so humbled and tamed his spirit, that all we now hear from him, is, "Let him curse: for God hath said unto him, Curse David." It is a most beautiful and excellent grace, when we can bear affronts and injuries petulantly done against us, without any great disturbance and emotion. And this grace God hath promised to crown with salvation: Ps. cxlix. 4. "He will beautify the meek with salvation."

[5] *A holy hungering and thirsting after grace.*

Matt. v. 6: "Blessed are they, which do hunger and thirst after righteousness: for they shall be filled:" when we do earnestly desire, both the righteousness of Christ's merits to justify us, and the righteousness of his Spirit to sanctify us: which vehement appetite will arise in us, if we have but a deep sense of our want of Christ and our want of grace. And, certainly, the infinite mercy of God will not suffer him to refuse the breathings of a heart, that thus lovingly pants after him: but he will, according to his promise, fill "the hungry with good things;" when, as for "the rich" and the full, those that are full of self and full of pride, he will send them "empty away."

[6] *A merciful frame of spirit.*

Verse 7. "Blessed are the merciful: for they shall obtain mercy:" when we are merciful, both to the souls and bodies of others; showing our prompt and ready charity, both in instructing the one, and in relieving and supplying the other.

[7] *A holy awe and dread of God,* is another grace that accompanies salvation.

This, possibly, is looked upon by some, now-a-days, as a mean grace; unworthy of that near relation in which we stand to God, and that freedom which we may use towards him: yet, the

Scripture doth lay so much emphasis upon this, that it often sets forth the whole work of grace upon the soul, by the fear of God.

[8] So, also, *love to God, love to his people, love to his ways and ordinances*, and whatsoever bears the stamp of his holiness printed upon it.

These, and many more, are such holy impressions upon the heart, that, wheresoever they are truly to be found, they are most certain evidences of a state of salvation, and do always infallibly accompany it.

The second inquiry is: "If I find upon my heart, any impressions like these, *how shall I certainly know whether they are such as accompany salvation?* for there is abundance of counterfeit grace abroad in the world: how then shall we discover what is true and genuine from what is false and spurious?" I answer,

[7] These impressions are then saving, when they are *social*: when they accompany one another, then do they likewise "accompany salvation."

Many, possibly, will pretend to high raptures, and some ecstasies of their love to God: many will boast much of their overflowing joys, that their souls are even filled with comforts, and overflowing with peace and satisfaction: many may, possibly, be as confident of their election, as if God had unclasped the book of life to them, turned them to the very page and line, and showed them their names written there from all eternity. But, if you would not be deluded, be sure you look how these things are accompanied in you. If ever your love doth cast out a holy and filial fear of God; or your confidence and rejoicing supplant a holy trembling before him: if your assurance scorns poverty of spirit, meekness and a holy mourning, as too mean and too poor associates; if your faith rejects good works, as too legal; or your work supersedes faith as unnecessary: believe it, these are not "things that accompany salvation" in you; but they are glaring delusions of the devil, who hath transformed himself into an angel of light, to impose false hopes and deceitful confidences upon you. When they are separated one from another, they are separated from salvation.

(2) They are then saving, when they have become *natural* to us, and make up a *frame of spirit*.

That man cannot safely conclude that he is in a state of salvation, who only now and then feels some violent impulses and passionate motions towards that which is holy: for men may run fast at first setting out, but then they quickly tire. But, where grace is true

and genuine, there it is ordinarily digested and turned into our very nature; so that it will, in some sort, be as natural to us to serve and please God, as ever formerly it was too natural to us to sin against and provoke him. Indeed, the very best are subject to much instability: many times, it is with them as with the sea, the highest spring-tides have the lowest ebbs: sometimes, their souls are like the chariots of Ammi-nadib; and, anon, they drive on heavily: but then they are sensible of their decline, variableness, and changes; and, when they cannot find that vivacity and quickness of spirit which sometimes carried them forth in the performance of duties, they mourn under their present dullness and stupidity, and endeavor again to recover their former excellence.

(3) Where these impressions are saving, they are *thriving and improving*.

The light of the righteous is as the dawn, that grows brighter and brighter unto the perfect day. Declining Christians have great reason to suspect themselves: and, if they quickly repent not, and recover their former state, and do their first works with their first zeal and alacrity, they may sadly suspect that their graces are not true; for growth in grace is the best evidence of the truth of grace. Indeed, in young converts there may be a great deal of heat and fervor, which afterwards, when they are more established Christians, may abate; and they may think this a decay in their graces, when indeed it is not. For we must distinguish, between a passionate love of God, and a sedate, serene love of God. Our passions do, in our first conversion, mingle more with our graces, than afterwards; and then we are like a torrent, very swift and rapid, but neither so deep nor so strong. And, as little brooks and torrents, though they run very fiercely, yet stop, and purl, and murmur at every small pebble that lies in their way; but great rivers, which seem to move with a slow and grave pace, yet bear down all embankments and dams, and whatsoever is in their way to oppose their passage; so is it here: grave and settled Christians may seem to move more slowly, without any noise or tumult; but they have a great depth and strength in them, and are able to bear down before them those temptations and oppositions, at which young novices, who are more fierce and noisy, are forced to stop, complain, and murmur. And we must estimate the growth of our grace, not only, nor indeed so much, by the violence of its efforts, as its prevalence and effectiveness, which proceed from its being more radical and habitual in us."

iii. The third general topic yet remains to be considered: and that is, A REGULAR OBEDIENCE, IN THE WHOLE COURSE OF OUR LIVES AND CONVERSATION.

The course of a man's life and actions is often, in Scripture, said to be his way: and, certainly, such different ends as heaven and hell cannot but have as different ways to lead to them. That there is a peculiar way of salvation the very devil acknowledgeth, Acts xvi. 17, where the Pythoness, or possessed damsel, cried after Paul and the disciples, "These men are the servants of the most high God, which show unto us the way of salvation." Now here let us inquire, *What* this way is, and *how* it may be known whether we walk in it or no.

1. *What this way of salvation is.*

The Scripture hath given us many characters and descriptions of it. And, as those, who direct us in a road which we have not traveled, tell us what marks we shall find in it; so the Spirit of God hath set down in his word many observable marks, which we shall meet with in this *via regia*, the highway that leads to the New Jerusalem, the city of the living God.

I shall only point out some of the most eminent and conspicuous.

(1) It is a *way of holiness*.

Isaiah xxxv. 8. "And a highway shall be there, and a way; and it shall be called the way of holiness: the unclean shall not pass over it." This way, though it be full of briars and thorns; and those, who pass through it, must expect to encounter many sharp tribulations, which will pierce them to the quick, and draw tears from their eyes and blood from their hearts: yet it is a way, that hath no mire nor filth in it; a clean way, wholly separated from the defilements and pollutions of the world. Holiness is the proper badge of all those, who are in a state of salvation. The sentence is irreversibly passed, that "without holiness no man shall see the Lord." Sin and the curse are inseparably linked together; so that he, who leads a wicked, impure life, must needs be a miserable, damned wretch, though God should not put forth his almighty power to destroy him: his very guilt would be his hell; and his crime, his punishment. As it would be inconsistent with the justice of God, not to punish an incorrigible sinner; so it is inconsistent, in the nature of the thing, that such an one should be otherwise than miserable: that habitual depravity, which is rooted and confirmed in him by many repeated acts of wickedness, renders him as necessarily and as fatally wretched, as the dreadful but righteous judgment of God: nor is it a thing possible in nature

that such an one should escape hell, who carries so much, nay the worst part of it about him; malice, rancor, enmity against God and goodness; and who expresses, in his actions, the same things that are done in hell itself. So, on the contrary, a holy life doth, by a natural consequence, infer blessedness: since it is not only inconsistent with the righteousness and veracity of God, but with the nature of the thing, that those ways should not end in salvation, which have so much of salvation in them; that those should not lead to heaven, which represent the choicest excellencies and perfections of heaven, viz., purity and holiness, which indeed are more genuine and noble parts of true happiness, than all those additional glories, which we expect besides. What is a holy life, but a life resembling the life of God; when we keep ourselves from all gross and scandalous sins, and indulge ourselves in none; but, with the greatest care and conscientiousness, endeavor to regulate our actions according to the will of God? And, certainly, wheresoever this purity is to be found, it is an infallible companion of salvation; for God will never condemn his own likeness: his justice will never punish his holiness; for it is the holiness of God that shines forth in the conversation of a true Christian. And those, who thus live the life of God here on earth, in their graces, shall have this life perpetuated to them, and forever live with God in glory.

(2) It is a *strait and narrow way*.

Matt. vii. 14: "Strait is the gate, and narrow is the way, which leadeth unto life; and few there be that find it." It is strongly fenced in with the authority of the divine law and commands: so that we cannot turn aside either to the right hand or to the left, without committing a trespass. Indeed, the Psalmist tells us, Ps. cxix. 96, that God's commandments are "exceeding broad:" how then is the way of salvation thus strait and narrow? I answer: They are, indeed, exceeding broad, as to the comprehensiveness of their obligation; but, yet, exceeding narrow, in respect to any latitude of allowance or indulgence: they are exceeding broad, in prescribing us our duty, and so large in this, that they extend, either directly or by consequence, to every action of our lives, yea to every thought of our hearts; but they are exceeding narrow, in giving us any scope or license, any permission or liberty, to walk after our own desires and inclinations. Now, oh Christians! what kind of life is that, which you lead? Is it a strict and accurate life; a life shut up within the compass of God's laws? Dare you not grant yourselves those allowances, which most men in the

world take to themselves? This is an evidence, that you indeed walk in that way, which leads to the heavenly city, the palace of the great King, when your path is thus enclosed, and all that you do circumscribed and bounded by the will and word of God. When we thus direct our lives and actions according to the rule of God's word, abstaining from things forbidden, doing all that is commanded, and acting in regard to things indifferent according to charity, we may undoubtedly conclude that we are in the safe and strait way to heaven.

(3) And, because it is a way so strait and narrow, therefore it is so *unfrequented*. "Few there be that find it," and fewer that walk in it.

Thou mayst almost know it, by the few tracks that are to be found in it. Indeed, a Christian's life is a singular life. Not that he is a man of singular and unusual notions; or of singular and affected phrases and expressions; or of singular form and mode of religion: these things have deluded many, and made them believe that they are in the way of salvation, only because they choose out by-paths of their own to walk in; whereas we know that bats and owls, and all the impure birds of the night, make their solitary flights in deserts and wildernesses. But the singularity of a true Christian consists only in his exact and critical obedience: he is the only man, who walks by rule; when the rest of the world walk after their own lusts: he differs from others, only because they differ from God: he conforms not to the customs and practices of men, only in those things wherein they contradict the commands of God: he affects no way, merely because it is solitary and untrodden; but would rather, if it might be, go to heaven, as David desired to go to the sanctuary, with a multitude, than single and alone. Yet, because the way of salvation is so generally neglected, and few there are who can be persuaded to decline the broad way that seems all strewed with roses, and tempts with all the alluring charms that may bewitch the senses; therefore, rather than perish with them, he is forced to forsake their ways: he dares not be a partaker of their sins, lest he partake of their plagues; well knowing, that, if he lie in the same wickedness with the rest of the world, he must forever lie in the same torments with them. Now, oh Christian! consider your ways: dost thou not see what an universal sway and empire vice hath obtained in the world? Profaneness and impiety have overflowed it, and covered the whole face of it, as the waters cover the sea; so that there is scarce room left on which innocency may rest the sole of her foot: "Through

swearing, and lying, and killing, and stealing, and committing adultery, they break forth until blood toucheth blood:" Hos. iv. 2. How many swinish drunkards are there, wallowing in their own vomit! how many debilitated sensualists are become brutish in their unclean lusts! how many earth-worms are there, crawling up and down in the mire of the world, and loading themselves with thick clay! Now, is your way the way of these ungodly sinners? Can you drink with the drunkard, and blaspheme with the swearer, and lie and steal, and commit all manner of abominations and filthiness, of which you see patterns and examples abroad? Is this the way of salvation? Or, while you accompany them in their wickedness, can you think you have those things in you "that accompany salvation?" What! shall all the world then be saved; and no distinction made, between him that feareth God, and him that feareth him not; between him that sweareth, and him that feareth an oath? Must heaven then be laid open in common for all intruders; and nothing more be required to have right to that eternal inheritance, but only confidently and presumptuously to hope for it? Are such wicked and impure wretches likely to be of the number of those few, who shall enter in at the strait gate? Of that little flock, for whom the kingdom is prepared? Never thus deceive yourselves: salvation is not attainable upon such terms: God will maintain heaven against you, so long as there is one curse to discharge at you: and, believe it, while you live as the most live, lewdly, profanely, carelessly, in the practice of known impieties, and the pursuit of your sensual desires; you must also perish as the most do, eternally and irremediably.

(4) The way of salvation, is a way of *universal and unreserved obedience*.

Indeed, under the first covenant of works, our perfect legal obedience was required as the condition of the continuance of that blessed and happy estate: an obedience, absolutely perfect both in parts and degrees, fully extended to the utmost latitude of God's commands, and commensurate to the farthest bounds of duty; and wound up to the greatest intensity of love and delight in performing it. But we are fallen from all possibility of living in this perfect obedience to the will of God: and therefore now, under the covenant of grace, God requires from us obedience, as a necessary concomitant of salvation, not legally but evangelically perfect; which he is pleased then to account such, when we endeavor to the utmost to fulfill the whole law, and to please him in all things. If we unfeignedly desire to submit our souls unto the authority of

God's commands in all things, without excepting or reserving to ourselves any beloved or darling lust, this is such a course of life as doth infallibly "accompany salvation:" and, though it be likewise accompanied with many inevitable failings and infirmities, yet these should only cause us to walk the more cautiously and mournfully, but not despondingly; for such an universal obedience as this shall not fail of its acceptance and reward: Ps. cxix. 6: "Then shall I not be ashamed, when I have respect unto all thy commandments." The whole law is contained in two things: the duties, which immediately concern God; and those, which immediately concern men; and that obedience, which is saving, will equally respect both. Now examine what is the course of thy life. What is thy religion towards God? Is not the most, that can be said of thee, that thou art peaceable and a good neighbor? Is it not the best character, which can be given of thee, that thou art a quiet, friendly man? Or, if thou hast taken up a splendid profession, and art frequent in the duties of God's worship, what is thy demeanor towards men? Art thou not turbulent, proud, heady, disobedient and untractable, unjust and oppressive, self-seeking, greedy and covetous? If thou art defective either in the one or in the other, and dost not to the utmost endeavor to keep a good conscience "void of offense" both "toward God and toward men," let me tell thee, that all in which thou gloriest, or unto which thou trustest, is far from being that true and genuine obedience, which God requires from those whom he intends to save. If thou indulgest thyself in the neglect of any one known duty, or in the commission of any one known sin, nothing of all that thou hast done is such as doth "accompany salvation," or will ever bring thee unto it: for he that thus offends in one particular, though the command be never so contrary to his humor, interest, and inclination, "is guilty of all:" James ii. 10, 11.

(5) The way of salvation is a *way of truth*.

[1] Of truth, in opposition to *lying*. Ps. cxix. 29, 30. "I have chosen the way of thy truth: remove from me the way of lying." For, into the New Jerusalem "shall in no wise enter....any thing that defileth....or maketh a lie:" Rev. xxi. 27: and, "without are dogs....and whoremongers, and murderers....and whosoever loveth and maketh a lie:" Rev. xxii. 15.

[2] Of truth, in opposition to *error*. The Apostle speaks very dreadfully concerning some, whom God should give up to strong

delusions, "that they should believe a lie: that they might be damned, who believed not the truth:" 2 Thess. ii. 11, 12.

[3] Of truth, in opposition to *insincerity*. Then is your way the way of truth, when you direct the main course of all your actions, so that the glory of God may be advanced by them: when you do them, not to be seen or applauded by men, but to be accepted by God; and would still persevere to do your duty, though all the world should decry and condemn it: this is the way of truth, and of salvation. Whereas the hypocrite is only so far good, as others will countenance him: he is only good, in good times: and, though he accompanies them that are going towards salvation, and his duties may seem to keep pace with theirs, and his life to be as strict and exemplary as theirs; yet, believe it, theirs shall be rewarded, when his shall be exploded, as being performed in the falsehood and dissimulation of his heart, and done rather to men than to God.

2. The second inquiry was, *How we may know whether we walk in this saving way, or no?*

And to this, all, that I have said before in describing this way, may well be recollected as an answer. And, therefore, I shall but add a word or two more.

(1) It is an evidence that this way shall be saving to thee, when it is the way of thy *choice*.

Ps. cxix. 173: "I have chosen thy precepts." When you take not up your course of life, only by imitation, or tradition, or upon compulsion. For many there are, who may walk in a right way, but not with a right heart: and may serve God, not for God's sake, but because they see that such and such duties have been customarily performed in their families and by their ancestors, time out of mind; and so they keep up the same as a relic of antiquity, rather than a piece of devotion; and bear the badge of their Christianity, only as they do their coat of arms, because handed down to them by their ancestors.

(2) When thou walkest *uniformly* in thy obedience, then is thy way and course of life such as accompanies salvation. When thou art not pious only by fits and starts; but keepest an even and constant tenor and temper.

(3) When thou walkest *forward* in these ways; when thou goest from strength to strength, still gaining ground towards heaven; and art nearer to salvation than when thou first believedst, not only in time and years, but in fitness and disposedness for it.

Prov. iv. 18. "The path of the just is as the shining light, that shineth more and more unto the perfect day." While thou thus addest to thy "faith, virtue; and to virtue, knowledge; and to knowledge, temperance; and to temperance, patience; and to patience, godliness; and to godliness, brotherly-kindness; and to brotherly-kindness, charity:" 2 Pet. i. 5-7: one grace unto another, and to all thy graces farther measures and degrees of perfection; thou mayst be well assured, while these are in thee and abound, increasing with all the increase of God, that he will add glory to glory for thy reward, and that an abundant entrance shall be administered to thee into the everlasting kingdom of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ.

MISCELLANEOUS SERMONS.

VII.

A DISCOURSE ON THE BEAUTY OF HOLINESS.

Her ways are ways of pleasantness, and all her paths are peace.
PROV. iii. 17.

WHOSOEVER would effectually plead the cause of piety and religion, must not only recommend the principles of it to the understanding, as most true and certain, but the practice of it to the will and affections, as desirable and delightful. For we find it verified by daily experience, that it is much easier to conquer the arguments of atheism, than the prejudices of profaneness: and when we have measured the judgment, to yield to the reasonableness of the Christian Doctrine, and the infinite advantages of its rewards; yet still we must encounter a strong reserve of prejudices and mistakes, ghastly specters and hideous apparitions, which fright the will from embracing a religion, that is represented so dismal and unpleasant. Pleasure is so sweet and potent a charm, that neither reason nor rewards can prevail against the insinuations of it.

And therefore nothing would tend more to the advancement of true godliness, than if we could clearly demonstrate, that it hath not only the advantage over sin and vice, in respect to future and eternal joys, but in respect to present pleasure and satisfaction; and thereby convert temptation into motive, the snare of the devil into a cord of love, and turn the most destructive engine of hell against its own gates. For, whilst men's minds are possessed with a false opinion, that the ways of virtue are all strewed with thorns and nettles; that piety is a sour, ill-natured, harsh thing, a sullen matron who entertains her followers only with sighs and tears, sad reflections and doleful regrets; that to obtain the joys of the next life, we must bid an everlasting adieu to the comforts of this, and never more expect a cheerful hour, a clear day, or a bright thought to shine upon us: it will be utterly in vain to bring them tidings of the heavenly Canaan, that "land which floweth with milk and honey;" for the dread of these Anakims and fenced cities, will make them murmur against their guide, and resolve rather to die in Egypt.

I thought therefore, that the best service I could do for religion would be, to pluck off this deformed mask, and to represent true piety and holiness in its genuine beauty and sweetness: and to convince the voluptuous world, that they woefully mistake in their estimate and pursuit of pleasure; that they seek the living among the dead; that they neglect the fountain of living waters, and seek for refreshment at those cisterns which hold no other but the tainted waters of Marah and Meribah, bitterness and strife.

To this end I have chosen these words of Solomon: "Her ways are ways of pleasantness, and all her paths are peace."

That relative particle, "her" ways, leads us back to the 13th verse: "Happy is the man, that findeth wisdom; and the man, that getteth understanding." From which he proceeds to demonstrate the happiness of this man, in the following verses, by the excellence of wisdom: vv. 14, 15. "She is more precious than rubies: and all the things that thou canst desire are not to be compared unto her:" then, by the rewards of it, in three of the choicest blessings which human nature doth most covet, long life, riches, and honor: "length of days is in her right-hand; and, in her left-hand, riches and honor:" and, lastly, by the pleasantness of it, in the words of my text, "her ways are ways of pleasantness." So that, if life, if riches, if honor, if pleasure, if the confluence of all good, can make a man happy, he might well pronounce, "Happy is the man, that findeth wisdom."

Well, but what is this wisdom, which is thus profitable, thus pleasant? Is it a subtle management of our own concerns, or a politic negotiating of the mighty affairs of states and kingdoms? Alas! the cares, perplexities, and disquiets, which attend these things, do evidently prove, that they are not "ways of pleasantness:" but, sometimes, unsafe; always intricate and entangled. In a word, therefore, that wisdom, whose ways are "pleasantness and peace," is nothing else but true religion, solid piety and holiness: "the fear of the Lord, that is wisdom; and to depart from evil, that is understanding:" Job xxviii. 28.

And therefore we find, that, throughout this whole book of the Proverbs, wherein Solomon doth so often chastise the fool, he means no other person but the wicked man. Wisdom and folly are synonymous terms with holiness and impiety; and do very well express them, both in their causes and their consequences: for, as folly is the cause of sin, and the consequences of sinning do very evidently prove them fools who commit it; so wisdom is the origin of piety,

and the consequences of piety do clearly prove them wise who follow it.

So then you see, that these ways of wisdom, which are recommended to us as pleasant, are the fear of God, holiness, and true piety.

I know that this will seem a grievous paradox to as many as have not seen the beauty, nor tasted the sweetness of a holy life; but have degraded themselves to a brutish state, and have nothing left to relish pleasures but their senses: and yet even to such, (if their sensuality hath not quite extinguished their reason, and they have but understanding enough to name them men,) I doubt not to prove, that the pleasures of a holy life are far more considerable than the pleasures of sin; and that the rigors and severities of it are less grievous, than the trouble and uneasiness of being wicked.

I. To this end I must first premise, that all PLEASURE ariseth from a mutual adaptation and harmony between the faculty and the object. For, where there is any disagreement, either in contrariety or excess, the result is not pleasure, but torment. Light, when it is just proportioned to the strength of the eye, is the pleasure and beauty of the whole creation: "It is a pleasant thing," saith Solomon, "to behold the light." And sounds, when they are modeled to the capacity of the ear, cause a sweet melody and consent. And so it is, likewise, with all other objects: when they are adapted to the powers which are to receive them, pleasure and sweetness are the offspring. Now man is *ὀργανον διχορδον*, "A two-stringed instrument:" his soul is one, and his body the other; and, as he receives smooth touches upon either, according to the various objects that are fitted to them, so spring up pleasure and delight.

I. THE PLEASURES, WHICH RELIGION BRINGS, ARE NOT SUCH AS DO IMMEDIATELY AFFECT THE BODY, the drossy and earthy part of man.

It never spread the glutton's table, nor filled the drunkard's cup, nor was taster to either. These offices are too mean and sordid for it. And, if thou canst relish no other delights, go herd thyself among beasts. The dog and the swine are fit company, as well as comparisons, for thee; and thou wert made a man, a rational and intellectual creature, to no purpose, unless to be eternally punished: since the soul of a brute can as well taste the pleasures of sense, as thy immortal one. Yet, if any think these

such considerable delights, that they cannot easily forego them; let me add,

ii. That RELIGION AND PIETY, as they allow, so they ADD A SWEETNESS AND RELISH TO THE LAWFUL COMFORTS OF THIS PRESENT LIFE, which dissipation and intemperance corrupt and vitiate.

Let me here boldly appeal to your experience, whether sobriety and temperance be not more true pleasure (I had almost said voluptuousness) than excess and riot. And, I dare say, that those, who come to their natural refreshments, and have moderation for their servant, find a much better aid in their entertainment, than those, whose excessive luxury, by seeking to please, only cloy and stupefies their senses. Besides, a constant fear of God and a conscientious obedience rendered to him, give such a seasoning to all our earthly enjoyments, that they are all received by us as expressions of his love and fatherly care towards us; which is such a pleasure, that excess and epicurism could never afford. A good conscience is a continual feast: and that poor Christian, who hath his dry morsel made savory with "the hidden manna," fares more deliciously every day than Dives himself; whose guilt not only poisons his dainties to his soul, but sours them to his palate. God is the great householder of the world: we are all entertained as guests at his table, and his bounty provides for us: but, as the wise man saith, Prov. xv. 17: "Better is a dinner of herbs, where love is; than a stalled ox, and hatred therewith;" so, truly, where the love of God is enjoyed, the most slender provision is far more sweet and comfortable, than the greatest variety of delicacies where the hatred and wrath of God mingle gall and wormwood with them. What pleasure can there be in any estate, where a man is not well pleased with himself? Where guilt gnaws, and fears bode, and conscience brawls, as certainly they must do, more or less, in every wicked man? What more pleasure can he take in his possessions, than a wretched malefactor can in that prison-fare, which is allowed him to maintain his life, till he be dragged forth to execution? But, though godliness doth thus sweeten our outward state and condition, and is profitable for this present life; yet,

iii. The *chief joys*, which religion and piety give us, are INTERNAL and MENTAL; and those are incomparably beyond the delights of sense.

Even natural speculations have entertained inquisitive minds with such raptures, that some have been, as it were, wholly abstracted from the body; and have neither regarded pain nor pleasure of sense, whilst they have been employed about them. But, certainly, the joys of religion must needs be much more refined and spiritual, than those, which proceed only from a problem or demonstration of science.

II. Now this pure and spiritual pleasure **ARISETH IN THE MIND FROM THREE THINGS:** viz., from the conformity of pious actions to the rules and principles of right reason; from the peaceable reflections of a man's own conscience upon those actions; and from the hope and expectation of an eternal reward.

i. There is A CONGRUITY AND SUITABLENESS IN HOLY AND RELIGIOUS ACTIONS, TO THE RULES AND PRINCIPLES OF RIGHT REASON.

There are three general principles of natural religion imprinted in the mind of every man, which are the dictates of pure and untainted reason.

That God is to be loved and feared above all, and the revelations of his will to be credited and obeyed.

That we ought to govern ourselves with all temperance and sobriety, in the use of the comforts of this life.

That we ought to demean ourselves towards others, with exact justice and equity; the true measure of which is, "Whatsoever ye would that men should do unto you, do ye even so unto them." Matt. vii. 12.

This, indeed, is the sum of all religion: "To live," as the Apostle declares it, "soberly, righteously, and godly: soberly," in respect of ourselves: "righteously," towards others; and "godly," in the performance of those duties, which immediately concern the divine worship. And these are the general and primary dictates of right reason.

Now, as it is impossible, but that, where a suitable object strikes and affects the sense, there must arise sensual and corporeal delight and pleasure; so is it alike impossible, but that, where our actions do correspond with these principles of reason, there must arise an intellectual joy and complacency. No man ever took true joy and delight in doing that, which is unnatural: and, truly, every sin is, in a sense, unnatural, as it contradicts those principles of natural light and understanding, which God hath so deeply implanted in

us, that they can never be totally rooted out. And therefore there must needs be jarring and discord in the mind of a wicked man, whose actions are contrary to those first principles of his reason, which he always opposeth, but can never overcome: and this, of necessity, must make his life very uneasy and uncomfortable. Whereas a holy man, who squares his actions according to his principles, finds such a just proportion between them, that there is no variance, no contest; but the sweet touches of them mutually, one upon the other, strike a perpetual harmony in his soul; and the result of this must needs be peace and pleasure.

ii. Unspeakable pleasure must needs spring up in the soul, FROM THE COMFORTABLE REFLECTIONS OF OUR OWN CONSCIENCES UPON HOLY AND RELIGIOUS ACTIONS.

Be the difficulty of performing them never so great, yet this joy, which diffuseth itself in the heart after we have broken through all the reluctancies and oppositions that our corruptions, our sloth, or our worldly advantages make against them, doth more than compensate the pains and trouble which we have undergone. There will, indeed, in this our imperfect state, be strivings and lustings of the flesh against the Spirit, even in the best of men: but yet, certainly, the delight, which the soul enjoys after it hath conquered its sinful inclinations, is, infinitely beyond all comparison, above the delight which it could have reaped by consenting to them. What a calm and sweet repose is upon the face of the soul, after it hath performed a duty, and can reflect upon it as performed sincerely! How it triumphs in Christ after it hath wrestled with a temptation, and overcome it! How sweetly then doth he enjoy himself! How sweetly doth he enjoy his God! His prospect into heaven is clear; and he can discern a pleased God, a loving Father accepting his service and preparing his reward. Let others please themselves in the bitter sweets of sin; yet, certainly, the least relish of such pure, such inexpressible joy, is infinitely to be preferred before all the weak pleasures of vice and luxury, though conscience and condemnation were abstracted from them. Here, believe it, is true joy: it is not clamorous nor noisy; but a calm, sedate joy, that ravisheth the heart with a secret but powerful delight. The pleasures of sin are but for a moment; like the empty crackling of thorns under a pot, that make a short-lived blaze, and presently expire in smoke: but the pleasures of holiness are permanent and abiding; and entertain the soul with a most delightful remembrance, whensoever it shall look back and review

its actions. This is a pleasure, which never cloy, never tires us; neither can the frequent repetition, nor the long continuance of it, weary us: whereas all earthly pleasures grow either dull or distasteful, if they are not often changed. But a pious soul need not invent variety of diversions, to entertain himself comfortably: let him but look within doors, retire into his own breast, and he shall there find abundant joys, which though they are still the same, are ever fresh. But, this self-reflection, which is so sweet and comfortable to a true Christian, is a rack and torture to wicked and dissolute wretches; they carry a hated monitor about them in their own breast, a witness and a reprover of all their lewdness; and, when they seek for pleasures in sinning, it is their trouble and vexation that they cannot sin more quietly: there is a busy conscience of their own, which dogs them at the heels wherever they go, scourges them with scorpions, and threatens them with the vengeance of everlasting fire: and this embitters their delights; and, though it cannot withhold them from sinning, yet makes their very sins their punishment and torments. So that, if it were only upon the account of the reflections of conscience, a holy and pious life is infinitely more pleasant, than a lewd and wicked one.

iii. THE HOPE AND EXPECTATION OF THE ETERNAL REWARD OF OUR OBEDIENCE, makes a holy life pleasant and joyful.

The Psalmist tells us, that, in the keeping of God's commandments "there is great reward:" Ps. xix. 11. Our very work is reward for itself; and, if God should never give us other, yet we should be abundantly recompensed in the inward peace and satisfaction of our consciences, which can no other way be enjoyed: yet our gracious God both gives us such work as is reward for itself, and promiseth us an infinite reward for doing that work. Were there really as many difficulties in religion as our sloth is apt to imagine; yet, methinks, when such an excessive recompense as that of eternal life and glory is propounded to us, this should remove all obstacles, facilitate all enterprizes, and make the utmost pains and labor to attain it, pleasant and delightful. We see with what pleasure men strive and contend for a prize: the poor pitiful reward of a mouthful of praise, or the gain of some honorary trifle, makes them account that but a sport and recreation, which else were a toil and difficult labor. And, what! shall we, who are running a race in the ways of true wisdom, and see the crown of glory and immortality hung up at the goal, faint

and shrink at it as an uneasy and laborious task, to stretch our nerves, and to press still on towards the mark? Certainly, there can be no greater pleasure in the world than to strive in this race, to gain ground towards heaven, to make and to observe our progress in our holy course, to have the crown still in our eye till we come at last to reach it with our hand. And he, who cannot account this pleasant, hath not a soul capable of true delight, nor a spirit brave and gallant enough to be a Christian.

Let me add one other proof of my position.

iv. That must needs be most pleasant, which CALMS ALL OUR PERTURBATIONS AND DISTURBANCES, AND FITS US TO ENJOY BOTH GOD AND OURSELVES IN A SEDATE COMPOSURE.

But this is the effect, only of religion and true piety. Our disquiets proceed chiefly from the hurries of our mutinous passions; grief, anger, fear, and the rest, do oftentimes break forth upon the soul, like so many violent winds upon the sea, and ruffle it into a tempest, so that our reason is in danger to be tossed and shipwrecked. Now it is only the powerful command of religion, which can say unto these winds, "Peace, be still." Certainly, that man can neither enjoy peace nor pleasure, where these unruly passions tyrannize: what a troublesome, vexatious life doth he lead, that is a slave either to envy, or fear, or wrath! When he shall be continually fretting himself at another's prosperity, raging and studying revenge for every petty injury, grieving and desponding under every cross providence, frightened beyond the succors of his reason at every shadow and suspected danger! Certainly, if there can be any pleasure in such a man's soul, there may be pleasure and peace where fury dwells. But, religion, and the fear of God, settle and compose all these disturbances; and, by their majesty and authority, bind them all to the peace; so that we shall not dare immoderately to grieve or fear, nor at all to envy or meditate revenge. And, although the curbing of our passions seems a matter so difficult; and is one of those things, which make religion uneasy and unpleasant to those, who are carried away with them: yet, without doubt, he, who checks and restrains the excesses of his passions, lives a much more pleasant and easy life, than he, who lets them fly out into all extremities. I leave it to you to judge, whether it be not more for the peace and comfort of a man's life to forgive wrongs, than to perpetuate them by revenge. Besides the intolerable torment of a malicious spirit, is it not far better to rejoice at thy neighbor's prosperity, than to vex and fret

at it? For, by the one, thou enjoyest a share of his blessings; but, by the other, thou dost not enjoy thine own. And, to resign thyself to the will of God with patience and contentedness, suppressing thy immoderate grief for any affliction brought upon thee, is certainly much more for the comfort of thy life, than to languish in sorrow, and unfruitfully to consume thyself for what was not at thy disposal. So that, I say, religion is the best means to quiet all the tumults of your passions, and to make your minds serene and calm: than which there is scarce a greater pleasure imaginable.

See here, then, the woeful mistake of the world, in point of pleasure. They all pretend to it; but they seek it in those ways, which are the causes of all their disquiet and trouble. True pleasure consists not in noise and laughter: that is "the mirth of fools;" and it is a sign that all is not quiet within, when they are so loud and clamorous to drown it. No: true pleasure consists in clear thoughts, sedate affections, sweet reflection; a mind even and stayed, true to its God, and true to itself. There is, indeed, a little sordid brutish pleasure in sin; but it vanishes like smoke, and, if we be not utterly hardened, like smoke it will leave us nothing but tears in our eyes: or, if customary sinning hath made us insensible, it is but like giving drink to a dropsical person, which, though it please his palate for the present, afterwards sadly increases and enrages his thirst.

Compare the pleasures, which a truly pious Christian enjoys, with the muddy delights of a swinish sensualist who gratifies all his carnal desires; and you will find so vast a difference between them, that the very argument of pleasure, which usually lies as a main prejudice against a holy life, if it be rightly stated, will prove the most advantageous motive to induce us to embrace it. For, consider, whilst thou gratifiest all thy propensities and desires, what exquisite pleasures canst thou find, but such as are common to the very beasts as well as thee? Yea, and thou showest thyself more irrational than the brute creatures; for they keep within the compass of their nature, but thou transgressest the laws of thine: and either shame or conscience will give thee many a secret twitch and check, and whisper sad things to thee, which will, in spite of thee, make thy heart heavy, when thy face perhaps runs over with a counterfeit laughter. It is impossible, if thou hast any remainders of a man left within thee, to drown the natural impressions of a deity, of death, of judgment, and of future punishments: these cold

and shivering thoughts will come in, and be like water cast upon all thy delights, when they flame highest; and, in the midst of thy cups and jollity and frolicsome extravagances, be like a hand, not upon the wall, but in thine own conscience, writing bitter things against thee.

Well, when thou hast run through all the shapes of voluptuousness, what remains but only a damp and dullness upon thy spirits, a sting and anguish in thy soul, a grating remembrance of them, and dire presages of eternal vengeance? Dost thou not, when the phrensy is over and the rage of thy lusts somewhat abated, dost thou not a thousand times call thyself a beast and fool for them? Hast thou never seen a drunkard, the next morning spewing out his shame and his repentance together? Hast thou never observed the glutton to sigh and groan under the load of his crude surfeits and endeavor to relieve his conscience, as well as his stomach? These, who do not eat and drink that they may live, but live only that they may eat and drink, will then acknowledge, that temperance and sobriety are the only true voluptuousness; and, whilst their breath is still unsavory with their undigested fumes, belch out a prayer to God to pardon them. And are these the bewitching pleasures of sin? For these, will any be persuaded to provoke his God, stain and wound his own conscience, dishonor his body and ruin his soul.

Certainly, there is nothing wherein the sorcery of sin doth more plainly appear, than in persuading men that there is any pleasure in being wicked; whereas their own experience can abundantly attest, that it is a very hell above ground, and a damnation beforehand. Are these the men, who are frightened from religion, because of the irksomeness and difficulty of its duties, because it will expose them to sadness and melancholy? Whereas, I dare avow to them, that the most melancholy and gloomy day, which a true Christian spends in the most rigorous parts of his religion, with sighs breaking from his heart and tears running down his cheeks, hath a thousand times more true pleasure and more true joy in it, than all the days of mirth, and laughter, and excess, and riot of voluptuous sinners.

III. But, here, common observation and experience will be cited, to DISPROVE all these speculations concerning the pleasure of religion.

For, "What!" will the voluptuary say, "can we believe that

there is any such exquisite pleasure in a holy life, when we see those, who are its votaries, so pensive and melancholy, as if rust and soot were the only ingredients of their complexion? Their looks are sour and dejected; their discourses interrupted with sighs: still they are lamenting themselves, and the iniquities or calamities of the times, and are fit for no other converse but with tombs or ghosts. Whereas the rest of the world are gay and frolic: mirth and laughter are the employments of their lives: not a thought lies heavy on their hearts, nor a day on their hands. And therefore, certainly, whatever advantages a pious life may have for the future, it cannot have that of pleasure for the present."

This is a common prejudice: and it is *only* a prejudice. For, though I must confess, that the morose temper of too many Christians has brought this scandal upon religion, who, by an affected and whining sadness and a querulous humor, occasion the ways of God to be evil spoken of, and affright others from them; yet, if we closely examine the matter, we shall find, that granting the seeming unhappiness of some, it is altogether as fallacious to judge of men's joys by their outward appearances, as of their thoughts and intentions. And, therefore,

i. I grant that the JOYS OF RELIGION ARE NOT LOUD AND TUMULTUOUS; BUT GRAVE, SOLID, AND SERIOUS.

It is a true saying, *Res severa est verum gaudium*: "True joy is a severe thing." It is not so light and frothy, as to float upon the expression of the face. It lies deep and hidden, in the center of the soul; and fills it with calm thoughts, sedate affections, an uniform peace and tranquillity; and diffuses such a sweetness through all the powers of it, that a true Christian, who loves his God, loves likewise himself, and the entertainment that he finds at home in his own bosom. That ravishing joy so wholly possesseth him, that, if he seem less affected with the ludicrous follies of this world, it is but as grave and wise men are, not much pleased with the play-games of children, because they have nobler and more generous delights of their own. The mirth and jollity of light persons is too trivial, and their laughter itself too ridiculous, to recreate him: the soft and peaceful whispers of his dear conscience are a thousand times more diverting to him, than all the wit and merriment of those pleasant companions, whose whole life is but a jest and a tale. And, if at any time he seem reserved and retired in their company, it is, that he may listen to the more cheerful

discourses of his own heart; or that he is really concerned that the noise and din about him hath disturbed that secret communication: or, lastly, that he is cautious, lest he should be betrayed to any thing that might grieve a better friend, than any of them. And, now, can you really think, that such a person is melancholy and displeased, who carries himself thus, only lest he should be so? The mirth of the sensual and impure world would violate all his delights: it would be but like a muddy torrent rushing into a clear river, troubling its pure streams, and leaving nothing but defilement, mud, and disturbance behind it: and shall we think that man's life sad and disconsolate, because he seems less merry and jovial than others; whereas, in truth, he is so wholly addicted to pleasure, so much a servant to his own content, that he would much rather displease all the world than himself, and studies nothing more, than how he may keep his joys free from mixture and abatement?

ii. IF, AT ANY TIME, HE IS REALLY SAD AND DEJECTED, THIS IS NOT TO BE IMPUTED TO RELIGION AND PIETY; BUT TO THE WANT OF IT, EITHER IN HIMSELF OR OTHERS.

The irreligion and impieties of the age in which he lives, often draw tears from his eyes and sighs from his heart; and, when the flood-gates of wickedness are opened, and a deluge of sin and profaneness overspreads the face of the whole earth, can you think it an unreasonable melancholy, that he should lament, with the prophet Jeremiah, "Oh that my head were waters and mine eyes a fountain of tears, that I might weep day and night for the slain ofmy people,"—slain by thousands,—slain by their vices and excesses? Jer. ix. 1. Were the world more holy, there would not be so great occasion for grief and sadness as there is; neither would the godly lament so mournfully, nor all smart so sorely as they do. But whilst wicked men are merrily sporting themselves to death and plucking vengeance upon their own heads, his charity and compassion move him to mourn for those, who do not, who will not mourn for themselves; and to deprecate those judgments, which they are defying. And, therefore, for them to object melancholy and pensiveness, to abuse their gravity and turn their seriousness into ridicule, is both disingenuous and ungrateful: disingenuous it is, to upbraid them with that sorrow and sadness, of which they themselves are the cause; and it is ungrateful, to upbraid them with it, since it many times averts those

plagues and judgments, which else would soon turn their songs and frolics into roarings and howlings.

But, as they have too much cause to mourn for the sins of the times and places in which they live, so likewise for the sins of which they themselves are guilty. They often weep over the review of their own faults and follies; and, with the holy Apostle, cry out, Oh! wretched men that we are! who shall deliver us from this body of death! And, indeed, it is but fit and just, that, whilst the heart is a fountain of sin, the eyes should be fountains of tears. But, what! shall we therefore be so unreasonable, as to charge their holiness with their grief and sorrow; whereas, were they not in part unholy, they would have no cause for it? It is not their walking in the ways of wisdom, but their deviating from them, that makes their lives unpleasant: it is their wanton straying into the world's common, and seeking the foreign delights of sin, that disturbs their peace, fills their hearts with heaviness, their eyes with tears, and their face with shame: whereas, had they kept themselves within the limits of their duty, and the boundaries which God had prescribed them, their peace had been as secure as their innocence. Did you ever hear any of them complain, that they had been too holy and strict, too circumspect and conscientious? This is the complaint of the world against them, but it was never theirs. Whereas there are thousands and ten thousands, who sadly lament their former ways of sin and wickedness (for sorrow and shame are the necessary consequences of guilt) either here on earth to true repentance, or else in hell to everlasting despair. So that, it is not holiness and piety, but the want and defects of it, which are the cause of all that sadness, which so much discourages the world and makes them wrongfully accuse religion for it.

iii. EVEN THE TEARS AND SORROWS OF A TRULY PIOUS CHRISTIAN HAVE A MORE SOLID JOY IN THEM, THAN ALL THE NOISE AND EXTRAVAGANT JOLLITY OF WICKED MEN.

There is a sweetness even in mourning, when it is filial and ingenuous. Tears are a solace, and grief itself an entertainment. Sometimes, the very delicacy of a man's spirit will make him dissolve into weeping; and the love of God, as a heavenly flame enkindled in the heart, will distill tears through his eyes. The tenderness of his affection will engage him to a sweet mourning over his faults and miscarriages. And, whilst the Spirit of God moves upon the face of these waters; the next thing to be created in that soul, is light, peace, and joy. Those who have experienced

it can tell you, that the most transporting consolations of the Holy Ghost are then given, when they are most retired and pensive: they can rejoice that they are sad, because such a kind and child-like sorrow is to them a most certain evidence of the favor of God, and the remission of those sins for which they mourn. Whereas, on the contrary, Solomon tells us, Prov. xiv. 13; "Even in laughter the heart is sorrowful; and the end of that mirth is heaviness:" such, indeed, is the mirth of all wicked men: let them dissemble it never so artfully, yet they do but, with the Spartan boy, laugh and smile, while the fox, which he had stolen and kept concealed under his coat, was all the while tearing out his vitals: so these put on a counterfeit laughter, when yet, all the while, guilt and fear, terrors and anguish, are corroding and gnawing their very hearts.

IV. "But, what!" you will say, "is there then nothing unpleasant, nothing grievous and irksome in them? Can it be possible that this strait and narrow way should have no thorns, no rubs in it; nothing that is rigorous, severe and uneasy? What then shall we think of mortification, and self-denial; of plucking out our right eyes, and cutting off our right hands; a patient endurance of injuries, and requiting them with kindnesses; forgiving our most malicious enemies, and praying for them; a willingness to sacrifice our dearest enjoyments, yea our lives themselves, for the name of Christ, and the testimony of a good conscience? Are not these main and essential parts of our religion? And is there nothing in them, that is difficult to be done, and grievous to be borne? If not, why then are we so often commanded to strive, to watch, to fight, to wrestle, to run, to endure and hold out unto the last? All which expressions do certainly import, that there are many hardships to be undergone in a Christian life; especially also since it is represented as such a difficult and admirable thing to persevere in it unto the end. What pleasure can there be in crossing a man's own inclinations and appetites? What enjoyment in the self-cruelty of cutting off what is as dear to us as the limbs of our body? What pleasure in losing all for the sake of our religion? What pleasure in bearing affronts and contumelies, without either reply or revenge? Certainly, he, who can find out pleasure in these things, is fit to advance what paradoxes he pleaseth to the world; but will be much puzzled to find either reasons to maintain them, or persons to believe them." I answer this objection as follows:

i. That THERE ARE MANY THINGS IN RELIGION, WHICH ARE INDEED DIFFICULT AND LABORIOUS, BUT THIS DOTH NOT PRESENTLY ARGUE THEM TO BE UNPLEASANT AND GRIEVOUS.

Some of the greatest pleasures of this life are so; and that is scarce held to be a pleasure, which is not heightened and commended by labor. The pleasantness of religion and piety consists not in supine sloth and negligence: there must be earnest endeavors, strivings and strugglings to the uttermost. To a generous mind, as a Christian's is, nothing can be more pleasant than victory and conquest; which cannot be achieved without contending for it. The whole life of a Christian is a continual warfare. Now that, which makes the name of war so dreadful, is only the uncertainty of success: who is there so cowardly and faint-hearted, that, were he sure of victory and triumph, would be afraid of the encounter? Why, victory itself is listed under a Christian's command. Other conquerors have found it very fickle and inconstant: when they have levied armies and shaken nations, yet they could never make success take pay under them. But herein a Christian is more than a conqueror, because he is always sure of conquest, if himself will. And, whensoever we go forth to the combat, if we be not extremely base and perfidious to our own souls, we may be sure to return adorned with wreaths and laden with spoils. The mortification of our carnal desires is confessedly the most uneasy, as it is the most necessary part, of our religion: and, yet, what are they but shadows cast upon your fancies, flitting, airy, and empty nothings? We are to conflict with our own desires, our own passions, our own wills; and what more is required to a conquest over these, besides a firm and undaunted resolution? That man shall certainly be master of himself, who will but dare to be so. What though it may cost pains and striving; though it may make the heart pant, and the soul run down with sweat: yet to see your enemies fall by heaps before your sword, to tread upon the slain, and to dip your foot in their blood; this certainty of conquest will make the combat pleasant, though it be laborious. And he, who cannot think this an incomparable pleasure, hath not spirit enough to be a Christian.

ii. Since all pleasure ariseth from the suitableness of objects and actions to our natures, we must consider that THERE IS A TWOFOLD NATURE IN EVERY CHRISTIAN, HIS CORRUPT AND HIS DIVINE NATURE.

He is not all of a piece, but hath two contrary parties struggling

within him. There is the flesh lusting against the Spirit, and the Spirit against the flesh; and what is pleasing to the one, is a vexation and torment to the other. Now all those rigorous duties of religion, to which objection has been made, are only so to thy corrupt and sinful inclinations; but they are a joy and pleasure to thy renewed and sanctified nature. Thou must, therefore, of necessity, grieve and displease one part of thyself; and why then should it not be that, which is thy vile and sordid part? Give thy noble and heaven-born self the pleasure and diversion of thwarting and overruling thy sensual desires. Yea, this indeed, if thou art a Christian, is thy true and proper self: the other is but thy slave and vassal. Grace is that, which gives a Christian his individuality and denomination; and the new and divine nature, of which thou partakest, ought to be the commanding principle within thee, as being a participation of God; and therefore cannot, without the highest practical blasphemy, be subjected to thy lusts and corruptions, which are the portion of the devil. And therefore the Apostle distinguisheth between his unrenewed part and himself: Rom. vii. 17: "It is no more I.....but sin that dwelleth in me." So that those, which are accounted the greatest rigors and severities of religion, and which fright so many from embracing it, are really the pleasures and entertainments of a pious soul. Yea, I will be bold to say, that a true Christian more indulgeth himself by mortification, more gratifieth himself by self-denial, enjoys more true pleasure and satisfaction in those things which are looked upon as the austerities of a holy life; than all the voluptuaries of the world can, in abandoning themselves to all the profuse delights of a sinful and wicked life. For, even where there is no true grace to make a conquering resistance, yet there is a natural conscience to make a murmuring and a troublesome one. All the disturbance, that a true Christian finds, is only in the conflict, and, when that is ended, he sits down and enjoys the blessed fruits of his victory in peace and satisfaction; but in wicked men, the pleasure of sinning makes many sour returns upon them, and there are not only some stings mingled with their honey whilst it is yet in their mouths, but afterwards it turns all to sting in their consciences and gall and wormwood in their bowels. Now let me leave it to you to judge, which enjoyeth a more pleasant and quiet life; they, who cross their corruptions, and afterwards rejoice that they have done it; or they, who cross their consciences, and are afterwards vexed and tormented for it. The one, indeed, conflicts with his lusts, and buffets his slaves when they rebel against him; but, afterwards,

finds that peace and joy, which more than compensate his labor: the other conflicts with his light; and, after he hath offered horrid violence to his natural sentiments, is tormented with such pangs and horrors, that he becomes a burden and executioner to himself: and this puts him upon far greater abominations, that he may quite extinguish that glowing spark within him; that he may murder that troublesome monitor, his own conscience. and, if it be possible, may attain to the highest perfection, both of his pleasure and misery, even to sin quietly.

iii. Consider, that THE SEVERITIES OF RELIGION as mortification, self-denial, &c., ARE FAR MORE DIFFICULT AND DISTASTEFUL AT OUR FIRST ENTRANCE UPON A HOLY LIFE, THAN THEY WILL BE, WHEN WE ARE CONFIRMED AND HABITUATED IN IT.

Indeed, those, who are early pious, whose virtue groweth up and increaseth with them from their tender years, escape the pangs and molestations which others endure, in rooting out inveterate habits and changing the whole course of their lives at once. It must needs appear irksome, at first, to check those inordinate desires and to put a stop to the current of those vices, which have got authority by prescription, and never knew what it was to be opposed or denied before. But, whatever difficulties we may find in this, they ought rather to be imputed to the novelty and unusualness, than to the real hardship of the undertaking. And, perhaps, were a man resolved, from a long-continued and habituated virtue, to be dissipated and profligate, he would, at first, find not much less trouble in the ways of vice than a new convert meets with in the ways of piety. Custom and continuance will facilitate all things: and, when the roughness which is upon the soul is well worn off by use, it will the more easily and sweetly move itself in a strict and religious course.

iv. Consider, that THE SEVERITIES OF RELIGION ARE NO MORE NOR GREATER, THAN WHAT WE ARE CONTENT TO UNDERGO IN THINGS OF ANOTHER NATURE.

Nay, many times the sinner meets with far more trouble in the ways of sin, than the most strict and holy Christian can do in the ways of obedience. What strange artifices and intricate methods must he oftentimes use, sometimes to commit his sins, but most commonly to conceal them! It requires a piece of subtlety and stratagem to be wicked. Whereas piety is an open, plain, and simple thing: we need not lay plots for it, nor study to find out

the methods of it: there needs no other skill, besides an honest heart and a firm resolution: and therefore it is said, Isa. xxxv. 8: "A highway shall be there.....and it shall be called the way of holiness: the wayfaring men, though fools, shall not err therein." Nay, were we but content to undergo as much hardship and difficulty in the ways of religion, to obtain heaven and eternal happiness; as the men of this world do, to gain some poor, sordid, secular advantages; we should be most unreasonable to complain of them as rough and uneasy. What Christian is there, that takes so much pains to be saved, as many thousand artisans do, who drudge day and night at some poor manual employment to get a little money! And yet it is far more certain, that an industrious Christian shall be saved, than that an industrious tradesman shall grow rich. Men are contented to rise up early and go to bed late, and to eat the bread of carefulness, to bear many disappointments and undergo many hardships, only in hope of gaining some temporal advantage: and yet they murmur and complain of it as an insupportable burden, if they are put upon any difficulties to gain heaven and eternal salvation; although the gain of this latter be as infinitely more certain, as it is infinitely more precious than the gaining of the former. So that, in truth, all the complaints against the rigors of religion, are founded only upon mistakes and prejudices; and there is no course of life, shape it which way you will, that hath so much ease, sweetness, and delight in it, as the truly pious and holy.

Let me then persuade you, not to give ear to the lying suggestions of the devil and your own sloth. They are but slanders cast upon the ways of God, on purpose to deter you from walking in them. Do but make the trial; enter upon them, and you shall find incomparably more sweetness and satisfaction, more joy and peace in them, than ever you found in the ways of sin and folly. Possibly some, who only as spies have entered upon the borders of this land of Canaan, have brought up an evil report upon it, when they have returned to the wilderness. But, I beseech you to believe the concurrent testimonies of all good men, who have searched it throughout, and have neither interest nor design to deceive you. Believe the testimony of a Caleb, of a Joshua, rather than the reports of those, whose sloth or cowardice represents all attempts difficult, and all difficulties insuperable. Believe the testimony of God himself, who assures you, it is a land flowing with milk and honey. Let me therefore encourage you, in the

words of Caleb: "Let us go up.....and possess it; for we are well able to overcome it:" Num. xiii. 30. All imagined hardships shall vanish before us; and, instead of rough encounters, we shall certainly enjoy ourselves in pleasure and peace. This is the only way, wherein we can enjoy either God or ourselves. And this way, which is joy and peace throughout, will infallibly bring us to that blessed presence, where there is "fulness of joy, and pleasures for evermore."

MISCELLANEOUS SERMONS.

VIII.

A DISCOURSE ON THE VIRTUES WHICH ADORN RELIGION.

That they may adorn the doctrine of God our Saviour in all things.

TITUS ii. 10.

OF all Christian duties, those which are called relative are both the most difficult to perform; and, when performed, the best and surest tests of true Christianity and of the power of real godliness.

Difficult they are, because most of the temptations, which assault us, are chiefly bent against the careful and conscientious discharge of these. For they so often come to be put in practice, that the devil can never want either matter or occasion for his suggestions. They are so interwoven with our lives, and mingle themselves with all our actions and concerns, that it must needs be much harder not to mistake here, than it is in other duties of religion, which do not so frequently call upon us: inasmuch as it is far more difficult not to do that negligently, which we are to do always; than that, which only now and then requires our care and attendance. And our own experience, I believe, can sufficiently testify, that it is a greater task, and that we are fain to use more force and violence upon ourselves, to demean ourselves as Christians at home in our own families, in our shops, in our trades and daily employments, than in the church and the more solemn and immediate worship of God.

And, as relative duties are the most difficult; so are they the most certain and infallible evidences of true grace that can be given. For, as persons usually wear masks and vails abroad, but lay them aside when they come home: so the hypocrite, however he may be masked and disguised in duties which are beside his ordinary course of life; yet, when he returns to his domestic and ordinary converse, he will certainly lay aside his mask, and appear in the management of his daily affairs, to be what indeed he is, unjust and unconscionable. For, truly, it is almost impossible to lay such a violence upon nature, as to personate and counterfeit that, which must be perpetual and customary. And, therefore, it

fares with such as with players: who, though upon the stage they act the parts of kings and nobles, yet strip off all their pomp and ostentation in the dressing-room, and return home to their abject and sordid life.

Now, upon both these accounts, both because they are difficult and because they are the surest testimonies of our sincerity, we find the Apostle so often inculcating the practice of these relative duties upon Christians. Neither do I know any one subject, on which he is either so large or so pressing. We have ample directions given us concerning our demeanor in them, 1 Cor. vii. throughout the whole chapter: Eph. v. 22-33: Eph. vi. 1-10: Col. iii. 18-25: Col. iv. 1, and 1 Tim. vi. 1, 2. Nay, there is scarce any epistle, wherein the duties of our relations are not pressed upon us, as the greatest part and the best evidence of true Christianity. So, in this chapter of my text, the Apostle exhorts Titus, who was constituted overseer of the Church of Crete; both to a sedulous care of performing his own duty towards them, as standing in that spiritual relation; and likewise earnestly to urge upon them the performance of their relative duties, according to the capacities and stations wherein they respected each other: and, that he might rightly divide to each their portion, he directs him what instructions he should give the aged, vv. 2, 3, that the "men" should be "sober, grave, temperate, sound in faith, in charity, in patience:" to the "women;" that they should not be "false accusers," sowing strife and dissension by idle tattle and groundless rumors; that they should not be "given to much wine," but should be "teachers of good things:" to the younger; vv. 4-6, that the "women" should be "sober," and "love their husbands," and "their children;" that they should "be discreet, chaste, keepers at home, and obedient to their own husbands:" that the men should be "sober-minded," not puffed up with vain glory and self-conceit, the sins usually of that age: and then, in the 9th and 10th verses, he descends to the duties of "servants;" and lays an injunction upon him to exhort them, that they "be obedient unto their own masters, and to please them well in all things: not answering again," when they are reprov'd; not to purloin from them, but to be faithful in the trust which is committed to them.

These are the duties, which St. Paul gives in charge, to so great a pastor as Titus, who was set over the whole island of Crete, as the chief pastor in dignity, and I think in authority and jurisdiction too. These, I say, are the duties, which so great an Apostle enjoins so great a pastor earnestly to press upon them. But, alas!

have we not many, so superciliously proud and so puffed up with a vain conceit of their greater perfection, that they would account that minister flat and dull, who should insist upon such low things as these are? Nothing, now-a-days, is thought worthy an auditory, but some high mystical speculations; which, too often, are as far from being intelligible, as they are from being practicable. And, for these common and daily duties of a Christian life, they undervalue them as below their attainments: and leave them to honest, moral men; as fit for such only, whom they despise and undervalue too. Let me tell such pharisaic spirits, that it is not their sublime notions, not their refined phrases; it is not any affected, new-fangled way of expressing the awful and tremendous truths of the Gospel; it is not their contemning the weaknesses of some, nor their judging the miscarriages of others: but it is the careful and conscientious practice of these mean and slighted duties of a Christian life, that gives a luster to religion, and makes the face of it look beautiful and amiable. And therefore the Apostle, after he had given such a strict and particular charge concerning these sundry duties, subjoins the reason why he would have him so instant in exhorting them to these: and that is in the words of my text, "That they may adorn the doctrine of God our Saviour in all things."

In discussing the subject thus presented, I shall arrange my remarks under three heads, and show,

First. What it is to adorn the doctrine of Christ; Second. How the ornaments discovered affect their object; and, Third. Make some appropriate exhortation to those who profess true godliness.

I. I am to show WHAT IT IS TO ADORN THE DOCTRINE OF CHRIST.

As preliminary, I must consider *what is meant by* "the doctrine of God our Saviour."

Now, though God is an essential name, and therefore common to each glorious Person of the ever-blessed Trinity, yet that addition of "our Saviour" seems to restrain it to the second Person, our Lord Jesus Christ, who is God our Saviour in a more especial manner. And this "doctrine of God our Saviour," here spoken of, is nothing else but the gospel of Christ; containing, both those truths which Christ himself immediately taught, and those also which he by the Holy Ghost inspired the Apostles and penmen of the Scripture to reveal to the world.

The whole sum of this doctrine of Christ consists in these two things, viz.: in *principles*, containing the mysteries of faith; and in *precepts*, enjoining the duties of obedience.

Some things in the doctrine of our Saviour we are to know and believe, which could never have been discovered to us, but by divine revelation. Such are, the mysteries of the Trinity, the incarnation of the Son of God, the redemption of the world by his death and passion, the way of obtaining justification and eternal salvation by believing; and such other profound truths, which neither reason, nor the works of creation and providence, could ever have disclosed to us, but are now made known only by the gospel.

Other things in this doctrine, we are commanded, not only to believe, but to practice. And those are, not only all the duties of the moral law, respecting both God and man, which are now taken into the pale and within the protection of the gospel; but also the duties, which immediately belong unto the covenant of grace; such as our believing on Jesus Christ, accepting him in all his offices, and relying upon him alone for life and eternal happiness.

I now proceed to treat of the first main topic, and shall show what it is to adorn this doctrine, both negatively and positively.

1. *Negatively.*

(1) It is not to *add any new beauty or excellence* unto it, which was not in it before.

For this doctrine is every way perfect and complete: and so it is affirmed to be, James i. 25: "Whoso looketh into the perfect law of liberty." There is nothing superfluous, nothing defective in it: but a perfect symmetry, and harmony of parts; each of them, as it is in a beautiful body, lovely in itself; and all of them, taken together, mutually setting off and making each other more beautiful and lovely. Here we need no unwritten traditions, to which the Romanists give an equal veneration with the Scriptures: for, either their traditions are consonant to Scripture, and so are unnecessary; or contrary to Scripture, and so are pernicious: and, if it be said, they may be different from Scripture and yet not contrary to it, as handing down to the world those truths and those duties, concerning which the Scripture hath made no mention, I answer, this is not to be different only, but contrary; for the Scripture itself hath said, 2 Tim. iii. 16, 17, that it is all "given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness: that the man of God may be perfect, thor-

oughly furnished unto all good works:" there can, therefore, be no unwritten traditions joined in commission with the Scriptures. If they speak according to that word, they may be received as truths rightly collected from it; but if they lay down doctrines repugnant to Scripture, or teach any thing as necessary to be believed and embraced which is not contained in those sacred oracles, they ought to be rejected as old lies, and tales forged by the old father of lies, only to deceive the minds of the simple. And those, who think their religion beautiful because of these, take trash and dung for ornaments, and deformity for beauty: and, in their opinion, that giant, mentioned 2 Sam. xxi. 20, who had six fingers on each hand (more than nature intended), must pass for the most comely person. Certainly, the doctrine of Christ is so entire and perfect, that it needs no new additions, to eke it out; nor any of the paint of the antichristian Jezebel, to beautify and adorn it.

(2) To adorn the doctrine of Christ, *is not to dress it up in any new fashion or new mode of religion.*

Truly, there is a kind of garb of religion now abroad. We must not speak, and I am sure we do not act, like the Christians of older times: their simplicity and plainness, both of speech and of conversation, is now worn as much out of request, as their clothes are: and those truths, which warmed their hearts and saved their souls; those truths, by which they lived, and for which they would have died; are now looked upon, by the refined Christians of our age, as old-fashioned things, and so laid aside. Some trim it up in uncouth phrases, and never think they speak like the oracles of God, unless they speak that which cannot be understood by the wit of man; and, like the priests of Apollo, are then inspired, when they utter unintelligible riddles and ambiguities: as if to adorn the doctrine of Christ, were to veil it; and it were then most beautiful, when most obscure. Others think they adorn it, when they are still altering and changing it; casting out this way, and bringing in another; and then finding fault with that: as if religion were designed not to reform us, but still to be reformed itself; and were made for no other purpose in the world, but only to be mended. This is not to adorn the doctrine of Christ, but abundantly to disparage it; when either we think to add any new excellence unto it, which before it had not; or to dress and trick it up in new fashions and new modes of religion. It is not to be done by old traditions, or new opinions, or any fantastic and affected way of delivering and expounding the truths of the Gospel.

2. *Positively:*

To "adorn the doctrine of God our Saviour," is, *to live conformably to it*. For the doctrine of Christ consists, as I told you, in two things: the mysteries of faith, and the duties of obedience. And we adorn this doctrine, when we live suitably to both of these.

(1) When we endeavor to live according to *the belief of those mysteries of grace and mercy*, which are revealed in it.

In this doctrine it is, that we have the glad tidings of happiness and salvation restored unto mankind by a Mediator: that the forfeiture we had made of our very lives and souls to the justice of God, is now redeemed by our surety, Jesus Christ; who hath undertaken the desperate work of reconciling sinners to a holy and jealous God, and hath himself filled up that *μεγα χάσμα*, that vast and impassable gulf, which was between heaven and us; laying his cross for our bridge, and himself for our way to pass over into eternal bliss and joy. Now we are said to "adorn" this "doctrine of God our Saviour," when we live answerably to the obligations which the grace of the gospel lays upon us. What obligations they are, the Apostle tells us in the next two verses after my text: "The grace of God, that bringeth salvation, hath appeared to all men; teaching us, that, denying ungodliness and worldly lusts, we should live soberly, righteously, and godly, in this present world." Tit. ii. 11, 12. It is the greatest reproach which can be cast upon the doctrine of Christ, that it makes men libertines, or gives them indulgence to sin. Some may possibly so argue, that, if Christ procured happiness and salvation for them, there lies no necessity upon them to exercise holiness and strictness; but they may live at random, for Christ hath done all: this is that cursed inference, which the Apostle, all along in his epistles, confutes and abhors: "Shall we continue in sin, that grace may abound? God forbid!" Rom. vi. 1, 2; and this is the greatest reproach that can be cast on this doctrine, that it should hold forth Christ as a patron of licentiousness, who was the greatest pattern and example of holiness and purity. No, certainly, he never intended by satisfying the justice of God, to encourage the wickedness of man; nor, that the promises of the gospel should be produced to invalidate the precepts of the law: but, as the Apostle tells us, verse 14, of this chapter, He "gave himself for us, that he might redeem us from all iniquity, and purify unto himself a peculiar people, zealous of good works." The proper influence, which divine mercy should have upon us, is to conform us to the divine purity: so saith the Apostle, 2 Cor. vii. 1: "Having these promises," the promises of

heaven and glory through Christ, "let us cleanse ourselves from all filthiness of the flesh and spirit, perfecting holiness in the fear of God:" and, 1 John iii. 3: "Every man, that hath this hope in him, purifieth himself even as God is pure." Now when the grace, which is exhibited to us in the gospel of Jesus Christ, is suffered to have this kindly effect upon us, by a sweet and genuine attractiveness to engage us to a holy and blameless life, then is our conversation such as adorns the doctrine of God our Saviour.

(2) To adorn this doctrine, is, *to live conformably to the commands of it*; requiring from us the duties of new obedience, in order to our eternal salvation.

Now these commands of the gospel, are the whole moral law; which is taken under the protection of it, and fenced about with the superadded authority of Christ's sanction. It is only through the grace of the gospel, that the imperfect obedience of a believer is at all available to his salvation, since the law of works accepts not any obedience under the degree of most perfect and absolute: so that when we endeavor, according to the utmost of our power and ability, to conform our lives to the commands of the gospel; when, by our universal holiness and obedience, we strive in all things to please God, then do we adorn the doctrine of Christ. We credit our profession, and set it off in the esteem of others, when our practices answer our pretenses.

Such are the ornaments which "adorn the doctrine of God our Saviour;" to live suitably to the grace revealed in it, and to the duties enjoined by it. We must now show how these ornaments effect their object.

II. Ornaments serve for two uses and intents. The one is, to cover the nakedness of those, who wear them; the other, to beautify and set them off to the esteem and acceptance of others. Now such
A HOLY GOSPEL LIFE, ADORNS THE DOCTRINE OF CHRIST, IN BOTH THESE WAYS:

i. It HIDES THE NAKEDNESS, and TAKES AWAY THE SHAME OF RELIGION.

For nothing is a greater blemish and reproach to our profession, than the unsuitable lives of professors. I need not tell you, what a discredit Christians have brought upon Christianity itself, by their disorderly conversation. It were not so much to be lamented, if the shame of it lighted only upon those, who were guilty: but

the name of Christ is blasphemed through their miscarriages; and every one is ready to cast the dirt and mire into which a professor falls, into the very face of religion itself; and to upbraid Christ with the crimes of those, who pretend to be his followers, and of his retinue.

1. There is a *twofold shame and reproach, which befalls religion by the loose lives of those who profess it*:

(1) Wicked men are hereby led to think that religion is only a *mockery*; and all, who profess it, are but a company of dissemblers and hypocrites.

Indeed, there is nothing, which can convince the world that there is any reality in religion, but conforming our lives strictly according to its rules and precepts. And we may well impute the increase and growth of the atheism that is now abroad, to those strong arguments which men have drawn from the lives of Christians, to confute the doctrine of Christianity: for, may they not justly conclude, that it is impossible that such men should believe what they profess, while their lives are so plainly contradictory to their creed? Did they think it true, that there are eternal rewards and eternal punishments prepared to be dispensed to men, according to their works; did they think it true, that hell, and wrath, and flames, and chains of darkness, and intolerable torments, must be the eternal portion of those, who reject the faith and disobey the commands of the gospel; could it be possible that they should live at such a rate of vanity, looseness, and profaneness, as they do? And, upon this, they conclude all to be but a cunningly devised fable; and give the holy and everlasting gospel of Christ, the lie. And what shame can be greater than this? It is a sad accusation, Rom. ii. 21-24: "The name of God is blasphemed among the Gentiles through you:" how so? Because, as in the former verses, they rested in the law, and had a form of knowledge; and were confident, that they were guides to the blind, and lights to them that sit in darkness: eminent professors it seems they were, like the men of our days: well, but mark: "Thou, therefore, which teachest another, teachest thou not thyself? Thou, that makest thy boast of the law, through breaking the law dishonorest thou God?" Thou, that professest the gospel, dost thou transgress the law? Thou, that pretendest to near communion and acquaintance with God, dost thou live as without God in the world? Thou, that preachest a man should not steal, nor lie, nor swear, nor be drunk, nor commit adultery; dost thou lie, and steal, and swear? Art thou unclean? Art thou intemperate, and as vile as the worst

and vilest? Tremble at it: the name of the great God is blasphemed among wicked wretches, through you: those, who were before profane, you make atheistic, scorning and deriding the gospel of Christ as an idle fancy; and, because they see so little in their lives, conclude that there is no difference at all, between those who are called saints, and those who are called sinners; but only, that the one have their tongues a little better hung, and their fancies a little more excited, than the other. And, truly, I cannot but with shame and sadness reflect upon it, that the men of our profession are herein extremely guilty, who, by the unsuitableness of their conversation to the purity of their doctrine, make too many in the world believe, that it is their trade only to gull and cheat men; and persuade them to believe, what they are wiser than to believe themselves. Let us beware, lest these their blasphemies be not at last charged upon us, who, through a worldly, loose, and carnal conversation, have made religion even to be abhorred by them. It is only the strictness of a gospel life, which can convince the world, that religion is any thing real. And, if ever you would redeem its lost credit, show, by the strictness and holiness of your lives, that you do indeed believe the doctrine which you profess; and that you look upon it as that doctrine, by which you expect to be judged at the last day.

(2) The disorderly conversation of professors, as it tempts wicked men to think religion to be a false and cunningly devised fable; so, at least, *it tempts them to look upon it as altogether needless.*

Now what disgrace can be more foul, than to impute frivolousness to a doctrine, which calls itself the oracles of God, the only rule of holiness, and the only way to happiness? And to make that superfluous and unnecessary, whose chief excellence consists in its usefulness and tendency to our salvation? And yet this reproach upon the gospel, through the licentiousness of those who profess it, will be almost unavoidable: for, if we compare the strict precepts of Christianity with the loose lives of Christians, we shall be shrewdly tempted to conclude, that certainly these men have found out an easier passage to heaven, than by the strait way and the narrow gate. And, unquestionably, this very thing hath been a stumbling-block, at which many have fallen, and dashed themselves to pieces. For what can they think, when, on the one hand, they hear holiness and purity so much recommended, so earnestly pressed upon us by the doctrine of Christ; and, on the other, see it so generally neglected and despised, by those who pretend themselves to be most studied and versed in that doctrine; but that,

doubtless, these men do know somewhat, which perhaps they are loth to divulge, that gives them a dispensation from the practice of that godliness which they profess? And so they think that God useth them, as some tradesmen do their customers; that he asks high for heaven at first, but, when it comes to the issue, will fall in his price, and let them have it at a far easier rate than his first demands. And this, I am confident, is the very reason, why those very few, who walk strictly and holily, and demean themselves inoffensively both towards God and man, are yet so despised and hated in the world: some despise and scorn them, as a company of poor silly souls, who have less wit and more honesty by half than needs: others hate them as a company of impertinent busybodies in religion, who serve only to raise the market for heaven, and readily give God all that he asks: but, generally, the world looks upon them, as too precise; and as making too much ado about that salvation, which else would come at an easier rate. Look to it, lest this disrespect and villifying of the power of godliness and practical holiness, lest the contempt and obloquy that is cast upon a severe and mortified life, be not charged upon you, who, by a vain, carnal, frothy, and light conversation, have persuaded the world, that Christ was a more strict preacher than he will be a judge, and that his laws serve rather to show what holiness is than to exact it.

2. *Reflect upon the dreadful consequences which will follow, when wicked men account religion either false or frivolous.*

(1) To bring this blemish upon religion, that it is either false or unnecessary, is, in a great measure, to nullify the death of Christ, and to frustrate one of the great ends for which he suffered.

Jesus Christ died to satisfy Divine justice as a Redeemer, and to attest the truth of his doctrine as a martyr. He hath sealed to the world, by his own blood, both the certainty and necessity of the doctrines which he taught: and therefore Christ himself tells Pilate, John xviii. 37: "To this end was I born, and for this cause came I into the world, that I should bear witness unto the truth." And the greatest testimony, which he gave to the truth of the gospel, was upon the cross; laying down his life, and shedding the last drop of his most precious blood, rather than he would disavow or recant the least article of that holy doctrine which he had delivered. And therefore we have that expression, 1 John v. 8. "There are three that bear witness in earth, the Spirit, and the water, and the blood:" which, I think, may be consistently enough expounded, if we here take the first of these witnesses, the "Spirit," for the

spirit or soul of Christ, which he breathed forth when he gave up the ghost; and the "water" and "blood," to be that mixed stream, which flowed out of his side when the soldier's spear opened unto us that fountain of life and salvation. These three bear witness on earth to the doctrine of Christ, that it is both true in itself, and necessary also to eternal salvation.

Now consider, you, who, by a loose and wanton conversation, give occasion to the world to suspect either the one or the other, what do you less than invalidate the death of Christ; and bring men at last to believe, that he died for that which is either false or frivolous? Which is the greatest affront and indignity, that can possibly be put upon our Lord and Saviour. Must not the world think it very strange, that Christ should willingly submit himself to so cruel and ignominious a death as that of the cross, to confirm a doctrine, which few of those who profess the truth of it will yet be persuaded by all the rewards it propounds to put in practice? Must they not needs judge it a most absurd thing, to spread a religion, and then die for it too, the rules and precepts of which are either impossible or unnecessary to be observed? And, if they look into the lives of Christians, and take notice how much their actions are at variance with that which they profess; what else can they think, but that Christ lost his very death as well as his life, when he died to confirm such a religion, whose laws are so rigorous that they cannot be kept, or whose indulgence is so large that it cannot be out-sinned? Is this a doctrine, worth such pain and shame, worth martyrdom and the cross, which hath so little influence upon those who embrace it, to conform their lives to the principles which it teacheth? Are the rewards which it promises so inconsiderable, or the punishments which it threatens so easy and gentle, or the evidence which it gives of the certainty of both so glimmering and obscure, that it cannot prevail with those who own it, to abandon their vices or their present pleasures, for future fears and hopes? And, what! shall we think such a religion can ever bring its followers to heaven, when it cannot bring them to virtue? Believe it, this reflects highly upon our Lord Jesus Christ, and lays an imputation either upon his sincerity or his wisdom, in dying for a doctrine, which ordinarily hath no more power over those who profess and own it, than only to name them Christians.

(2) Consider, that the profession of religion, without a suitable practice, tends only to harden the hearts of wicked men, and to strengthen their hands in their course of sin and profaneness.

For such is either the weakness or corruption of human nature, that we are sooner led by examples, than by precepts; and follow the herd, rather than the guide; accounting nothing a surer mark of the right way, than the tracks of others who go before us. Now when wicked men shall see thee, who art a professor, live unanswerably to that religion of which thou makest a show, will they not be ready to bless themselves in their ways, and to cry, "peace, peace," to themselves; since thou, who thinkest well of thyself, and whom others perhaps think well of too, art in reality no better than they? "Do not I see," may such an one say, "that those, who are taken for saints, are proud, and impatient, and covetous, and revengeful? And if such men get to heaven, as they pretend they shall, why may not I? It is true, indeed, they talk of self-denial, and contempt of the world, and communion with God, and great spiritual enjoyments; but look into our lives, and mine is as harmless and innocent as theirs. If they let themselves loose to the pleasures of the world, drink till wine inflames them, discourse lewdly and lasciviously by tropes and metaphors, prevaricate and cheat in their bargains, and overreach the simplicity of those that trust them for their profession, why may not I; and yet be altogether as good a Christian, and in as safe a way of salvation, as they? They talk, indeed, of experiences, and acquaintance with God, and ravishing joys, and melting desires, and a list of words that I understand not; but, certainly, if God will not condemn them, though they do nothing more than I, but only talk; neither will he condemn me, for not talking as they do." And so they give themselves the reins, and boldly fly out into all manner of impieties; neither taking up the profession of religion, which they rightly judge to be of no worth without the practice of it; neither will be brought to the practice of religion, judging that needless, because they see it neglected by you who profess it. And so you make them sevenfold worse than if you yourselves were profligate and avowed sinners, denying the form of godliness, as well as the power of it. For a wicked and abandoned sinner, though he may prevail upon others to draw them into the same excess of riot with himself; yet his example is not so likely to harden men in sin and to seal them up under impenitence, as the loose examples of a hypocritical professor. Natural conscience will struggle, and hesitate, and draw back, when we follow those, who pretend no other, but to go to hell: they cannot but with remorse reflect upon it, that ever they should suffer themselves to be led by such as they know to be in the broad way to destruction. But, when they see

those, who pretend highly to heaven, and entertain flourishing hopes of glory and salvation; who stand sainted in every man's calendar, and whom all conclude to be of those few that shall be saved; when they see such as these indulge themselves in any way of wickedness, they presently take heart by such an example: and, if they think not, that they may do the same with a good conscience, yet they conclude, that they may do it without any prejudice to their salvation; and so sin quietly without regret, and perish and go down to hell with good company. Well, beware, lest their sins be not at last set to thy account: for, though they shall die in them, as the prophet speaks, yet certainly God will require the blood of their souls at thy hands; who, by encouraging them through thy loose example, covered over with a dissembled holiness, hast only made their crimes thy guilt; and shalt be punished eternally in hell, both for thine own hypocrisy and their profaneness.

(3) The inconsistent and unholy lives of professors, must needs induce wicked men to think that their ways are better than God's.

What else can they conclude, but that certainly religion and piety is some sour, morose thing; when they see those, who pretend most to it, steal away to refresh themselves with the pleasures of sin? Hath not holiness delights enough within itself to content you? Are not peace of conscience, calmness and serenity of mind, the love of God, the performance of duty, the consolations of the Holy Ghost, are not all these joy enough for you, but you must needs break the hedge, and stray into the world's common; as if you wanted pasture, or those pastures wanted verdure and refreshment? Is not a whole Eden sufficient for you, but you must likewise taste of the forbidden fruit? What is this, but to give a most wretched occasion to wicked men, to applaud their choice, and to think it much better and wiser than yours? What a disparagement is this to religion, that those, who embrace it, must be under obligation to sin and wickedness, for all the pleasant hours they enjoy! As if to sigh and weep, to be sad and melancholy, were the only employment of a Christian's life; or as if, indeed, there were not more true content and pleasure to be found in tears and sighs, in sad and serious thoughts, than in all those impure and foul delights, for which you forsake them. No: if ever you would adorn the Gospel and win over others unto the profession and obedience of it, live so that the world may see a Christian can live upon the allowance that God gives him; and that you do not belong to so hard a Lord and Master, as that you must be necessari-

tated for your work to serve him; and, for your recreation, the devil. While you seek your diversion in the pleasures of sin, wicked men cannot but think religion a mere drudgery, and themselves the only happy men; when they see those, who pretend much to enjoy God in the ways of holiness, forced to come over to their loose and sinful ways, that they may enjoy themselves. For shame, Christians! cast not such a disparagement upon religion: but let it appear, that it can maintain its servants upon its own; and hath enough not only to employ, but to delight them too.

(4) The unholy and inconsistent lives of Christians embolden others to sin more deeply and desperately, than else they would have done.

For always those, who are led by examples, make them lose somewhat of their rigor and severity. So that whatsoever scope and allowance thou givest thyself, others, who observe thy course and manner of life, will be sure to enlarge it for themselves: and so, by a wretched improvement, a small sin in thee shall become a great and heinous one in them; and thou too be guilty of it, who, by thy inconsistencies, hast given them encouragement to imitate and exceed thee. Thou, who art an eminent and glorious professor, the eyes of the whole place are upon thee, to observe and watch thy demeanor: they conclude, that thou aimest at nothing less than the highest pitch and degree of glory; and, therefore, if thou canst indulge thyself such a liberty, certainly they may allow themselves a larger scope; and, though they fall short of thee, yet they hope that they shall not fall short of heaven; wherein, if they may shine but as stars, it is all they expect, while thou shinest as the sun in the firmament. This is our wretched temper, that we are not ambitious for heaven and happiness, but content ourselves if we think we may have any share and portion in it: and, while we mark the failings of those, who yet we think shall be highly advanced in glory, we are apt to conclude, that though we allow ourselves a greater freedom than they take, yet we may be safe at last, although not so glorious. Thus, a foolish vain word in the mouth of a professor, may come to be an oath of another man's: an equivocation in him, may improve to be a gross lie in another: if he speak but slightly of religion and the things of God, others will be emboldened openly to scoff and deride them: if he carry on his affairs by underhand craft and cunning dealing, not showing that downright sincerity and plainness in his affairs, which a Christian and an honest man ought to do; others, who observe this, will be thereby encouraged to cheat and defraud. For in

following examples, we always deduct something; and those examples, which give us any kind of liberty, we shall soon turn into licentiousness. It is a sad thing to be exemplary, unless we are also most strict and severe; so that the world can find no flaws, no defects in our conversation: for, otherwise, we must answer for their sins, which our evil doings have emboldened them to commit.

And yet, notwithstanding these great mischiefs, mischiefs which strike at the very life of piety and religion; notwithstanding these which follow upon an unholy conversation, what is the ordinary rate at which professors live, but vain, frothy, sensual and worldly? Yea, as far removed sometimes (I speak it with shame) from the honesty of common men, as they would be thought to be from the pollutions and impieties of the world? Now, must it not needs be a stumbling-block to many, when men shall speak at such a rate of spirituality, as if some angel sat upon their tongues; and yet live at such a rate of vanity, and it may be of profaneness too, as if legion possessed their hearts? What shall we judge of such men? If we judge the tree by the leaves, what else can we think of them, but that they are trees of righteousness and plants of renown? But if we look to their fruits, envy, strife, variance, wrath, pride, worldliness, selfishness, what can we think of them, but that heaven and hell are now as near together, as these men's hearts and mouths? May we not use the same speech that the Apostle doth, concerning the Corinthians, 1 Cor. iii. 3? "Ye are yet carnal: for whereas there is among you envying, and strife, and divisions, are ye not carnal, and walk as men?" If the Apostle could have laid in a charge against these Corinthians, not only of envy, strife, and division, but of hatred, bitterness, and implacableness of spirit, of brain-sick opinions and self-seeking practices, joined with the utter neglect and contempt of the glory of God, as justly as we can against the men of our times: certainly, his reproof would not have been so mild as to tell them they walked as men, but rather that they walked as devils. Such are a reproach to religion; a grief and a shame to true Christians, who are jealous for the Lord God of Hosts, and cannot, but with bleeding hearts, observe the dishonor that is cast upon the ways of God, by those who will be saints in spite of holiness. They are so many stumbling-blocks laid in the way of others, embittering their spirits against the profession of holiness, since they account it no better than hypocrisy and gross dissimulation; or, else, en-

couraging them, by their evil examples, to continue in their wickedness and profaneness.

ii. Another use of ornaments, is, TO BEAUTIFY THE PERSON, WHO WEARS THEM; AND TO SET HIM OFF TO THE ACCEPTANCE AND ESTEEM OF OTHERS.

And, thus also, it is only a holy and strict life, which can "adorn the doctrine of God our Saviour." Nothing doth make religion so lovely and taking in the eyes of others, as the holy lives of those who profess it. And, to this, must we impute the wonderful growth of Christianity in the primitive times, when it gained more nations and countries in its persecuted state, than it can now gain persons in its flourishing. And the reason of its success was, that it had all the attractive charms, which are fitted to work upon the minds of men not altogether brutish: for, though it still retains the same innate beauty; the sublimity of its mysteries, the purity of its commands, the majesty and authority of its word, the excellence of its rewards, and the dreadfulfulness of its threatenings, and the clear and infallible evidence of all these; yet that, which added a mighty grace and luster to it, was the holiness and innocency of the professors of it; their meekness, patience, love, charity, single-heartedness; and, in every respect, a blameless demeanor, which made religion wonderfully successful in the world; mankind being rather affected by the eye than the ear, and more taken by what they saw than by what they were told of the excellence of Christianity. And therefore we find, Acts ii. 45-47, that when they charitably supplied the necessities of others, when they lived together "with one accord," in "singleness of heart," they had "favor with all the people;" and many were "added to the Church," even as many "as should be saved." This is the way to set off religion, and to make it amiable to the world. It is not to dress it up in uncouth expressions, nor to speak of the things of God in a singular and affected phrase; no, nor only to discourse of them in Scripture language, and to make it only the business of the tongue. The holy and everlasting gospel, which you profess, is not an art of speaking but of living well.

First. The blameless life of a Christian *gives life to religion*; adds as much beauty to religion, as natural life doth to a man.

Take a dead corpse, and, though it hath the same features, the same lineaments and proportion, which it had before; yet how ghastly and frightful a spectacle is it! And that very face, which

was beautiful and pleasing while living, yet terrifies and scares us, when the life and soul is departed from it. So it is here: the doctrine of the gospel, in itself considered, separate from practice, is but a dead letter; and, though there be a great excellence in it, as there is in the frame of a dead body; yet it hath not those charms and allurements, which it hath when the lives of Christians put life into it. The strictness and severity of its rules and precepts would rather fright and deter men from embracing it, than invite them; until they see the beauty of holiness, in the practice and good example of others.

Secondly. A holy and consistent life adorns and commends the doctrine of Christ our Saviour, as it testifies *the energy and efficacy*, which it hath upon the consciences and conversations of men.

The excellence of a doctrine is chiefly seen in the power that it hath to work upon the hearts and affections of those who profess it. Now when it shall appear to the world, that this doctrine of Christ hath been effectual to open the eyes of the blind, to tame stubborn and refractory sinners: that it hath been able to rend rocks in pieces, and to draw rivers of tears out of stony hearts: when it shall appear what a mighty change it hath wrought upon those, who seemed most boisterous and intractable; bringing them upon their knees to grovel in the very dust, before that God whom they have daringly offended; and that a few words of it should be able forever after to keep them in such an awe of his dread Majesty, that they would rather die a thousand deaths, than willingly do any thing which it forbids: when it shall calm all their passions, subjugate their very thoughts, govern all their actions; that they shall not dare to think, but by a law and rule; nor to speak, but under the control of their religion; nor to fear, nor rejoice, nor grieve, nor be angry, but upon permission from this: how mightily will this exalt and magnify the power of Christ's doctrine, and set it forth as triumphant in the world and over the world! It is the number, not of professors, but of converts, that is the glory of any doctrine. And this glory is peculiarly due unto the doctrine of Christ: all other doctrines of the world, though there be too many who own them, yet how few are converted by them to a sober and holy life? All the grave and elaborate precepts of heathen philosophy, which taught virtue with a great deal of skill, and all possible advantages of wit and reason, yet, as Origen against Celsus observes, never converted but two, Phædon and Polemon, from a vicious and dissipated life: and, for all other ways of religion, it is generally and truly observed, that the most zealous in them were

usually the most lewd and dissolute. That which Christ said of the Pharisees, may be addressed to them all; "Ye compass sea and land to make one proselyte; and when he is made, ye make him two-fold more the child of hell than yourselves." Matt. xxiii. 15. But, it is the peculiar glory of the doctrine of Christ, that those, whom it makes true proselytes, it makes truly pious. Envy not, I beseech you, this glory to it; but let it appear, that it is the only divine doctrine in the world, by having such a powerful influence into your practice, as no other doctrine hath, or can have. Raise your actions to such a divine height, that moralists, with all their civility, may be forced to confess, there is somewhat more in your lives, than nature or any other instruction can possibly bestow.

Let me now commend to your practice some particular duties; wherein, I think, the true and genuine spirit of the gospel doth most eminently appear. And, oh! that you would forever remember to honor the doctrine of Christ which you have embraced, and to adorn your profession, by the constant practice of these following graces.

1. *Love and brotherly-kindness one towards another.*

This is the very badge and distinguishing character of a Christian: John xiii. 35: "By this shall all men know that ye are my disciples, if ye have love one to another." Love is a most beautiful grace; and that, which sets a great luster upon religion, and makes it beautiful, too. It was that, of which the heathen took most especial notice in the primitive Christians; when they would not only communicate their estates one to another, but even expose their lives and offer their blood for their brethren: this made their very persecutors cry out, "See how dearly these Christians love one another!" We are all fellow members of the same mystical body, whereof Jesus Christ is the head: now as there is a sympathy in the natural body between the members, (for if "one member suffer, all the members suffer with it; or one member be honored, all the members rejoice with it;") so it ought to be among Christians; for we "are the body of Christ, and members in particular," as the Apostle speaks, 1 Cor. xii. 26, 27. How strange and unnatural it would seem, for the members of the body to make an insurrection one against another! for the hand to pluck out the eye; or for one hand to cut off the other! Alike unseemly it is for those, who are united together in the same body of Christ, to be divided in their affections or practices, or to rend and tear one another. This hath been the great sin and unhappiness of our days: one limb of Christ hath torn off another, as a limb of Antichrist: some

have separated, and become schismatic; others are become unnatural, and rejoice in the sufferings of their fellows: the weak have censured the strong; and the strong despised the weak: and, upon such petty differences in judgment and opinion, have arisen such vast breaches in love and charity; breaches, wide as the sea, and, without a miracle, as incurable: as if it were sufficient ground for quarrel, that one limb is not just of the same make, size, and proportion with the others. For shame, Christians! let us all, who hold the same head, Christ Jesus, be all united together in the same Spirit, and exercise mutual love and mutual forbearance. Or else, believe it, if the sheep divide among themselves, and separate and scatter, the great Shepherd will send in those dogs or wolves among them, that will make them run together again.

2. Another duty, which adorns the doctrine of Christ, and recommends it to the acceptance and esteem of others, is, *love to our enemies*; and a ready forgiveness of the wrongs and injuries, which have been maliciously done against us.

This is a duty highly pressed upon us by the gospel. Very few of the heathen, though they went far in many excellent points of morality, have ever attained to this height and perfection: and therefore Tully tells us, *ulcisci te lacessitus potes*; "when injured you can avenge yourself;" and again, *odi hominem, et odero utinam ulcisci poteram*; "I hate the man, and will continue to hate him till I can avenge myself." Aristotle, in his Rhetoric, also says, *Το τες εαθρες τιμωρεισθαι καλον δοκει*, &c.; "It is good," saith he, "to revenge ourselves upon our enemies: for it is but just to return the same measure we have received; and it is manly not to be overcome in any thing." But the gospel hath taught us another way of overcoming our enemies: Rom. xii. 21: "Be not overcome of evil, but overcome evil with good;" by praying for them, by doing them all kind offices of humanity and respect. Whilst we thus manage all the differences which we have here with others, whosoever gets the better in this world; yet, certainly, at the last day, the victory and crown will be adjudged ours. This is that, on which our Saviour Christ greatly insists, Matt. v. 44: I say unto you, "Love your enemies: bless them, that curse you: do good to them, that hate you: and pray for them, which despitefully use you and persecute you:" and he adds an argument, that is very cogent and enforcing, from the example of our Father: v. 45: "That ye may be the children of your Father who is in heaven: for he maketh his sun to rise on the evil and on the good, and sendeth rain on the just and on the unjust;" God doth good to all, even to his enemies; and this should

be our pattern to do good also to our enemies: especially considering, that, in doing good to them, we indeed do good to ourselves; for we pray for the forgiveness of our trespasses, according to our forgiving others those trespasses which they commit against us: but, while we keep and nourish any rancorous or revengeful thoughts, we do but put in a caution against our own prayers, and bind our iniquities upon our souls, yea and make our very prayers the most dreadful curses that can be uttered against us: for, "if ye forgive not men their trespasses, neither will your Father forgive your trespasses." Matt. vi. 15. Revenge is utterly contrary to the spirit of the gospel. As Tertullian speaks well: There is no difference, between him that doth an injury, and him that requites it: *nisi quod ille prior in maleficio deprehenditur, at ille posterior*: "but only that the one is wicked a little sooner than the other." Yea, indeed, the best way of revenge, if we study that, is to requite wrongs with kindnesses and good offices: what saith the Apostle, Rom. xii. 20? "If thine enemy hunger, feed him; if he thirst, give him drink: for, in so doing, thou shalt heap coals of fire on his head:" by heaping "coals of fire on his head," may be meant, either that thou shalt kindle in him a regret and tormenting displeasure, that he cannot vex, nor discompose thee, and so shalt make him the instrument of thy revenge upon himself; or thou shalt kindle in him such a sorrow and compunction for having causelessly wronged thee, as shall burn him like fire, until he hath given thee abundant satisfaction; or, else, lastly, thou shalt kindle upon him the coals of everlasting fire in hell, for persisting obstinately to hate and injure thee without cause or provocation: and that is a revenge to purpose; a revenge, which belongs unto him, who hath said, "Vengeance is mine, I will repay."

3. *Patience under tribulations and afflictions*, is a grace, which doth exceedingly "adorn the doctrine of God our Saviour:" when we are under any chastisement from the hand of God, or any persecution from the rage and wrath of man, quietly to submit without either repining or murmuring.

A Christian should pass through the world, with as little noise and tumult as may be. Wicked men may roar and rave in it: it is their country: but it is only a Christian's road, through which he is traveling to his own country; and it were a vain and endless thing, should he stop to take up a stone, and cast at every dog that will bark at him in his passage. But, because I have elsewhere treated at large concerning this grace of patience, I shall not farther expatiate here.

4. *Humility, or lowliness of mind*, is a grace, which doth mightily adorn the doctrine of Christ.

And, therefore, 1 Pet. iii. 4, it is called "the ornament of a meek and quiet spirit, which is in the sight of God of great price." A proud, supercilious, self-conceited Christian is a monster in religion. As any tumor or wen in the body is a great deformity and blemish to it; so these professors, who are highly elated and puffed up with conceit, are but wens in the body mystical; they are but blisters, which contain nothing in them but ill humors, and bring a great deal of deformity and discredit upon that holy religion which they profess.

Pride is twofold, and may be termed childish or Satanic. The former is that which has the body for its object; through this men adorn the body beyond decency, and then think themselves as much better than others, as their dress is finer. The latter is that which lurks within: when men are proud of their excellencies and perfections; proud of their wit, of their judgment, of their elocution, or any other of God's gifts. Yea, and pride is such a rust and canker, as can seize on the purest metals: there may be some proud of their very graces; yea, proud of their very humility.

Now, though the former pride be more ridiculous, yet this latter is more pernicious and baneful; and both are contrary to the spirit of the gospel, and bring a blemish upon the professors of it.

There are two things in pride, which make it so unlovely: unsociableness, and contention.

A proud man is an *unsociable* man. He looks upon all others as below him, hates a rival, and scorns to have an equal. If all will not yield to his opinion in matters of dispute, or to his humor in matters of practice, he takes himself as affronted by them; and, because he hath given himself a kind of sovereignty over others, looks upon himself as wronged, if others will not do so too, and let him control and govern them as the only fit and able person to do it. Hence we may commonly observe, that, though there is a kind of love and complacency between all other sinners one towards another; as the drunkard loves his fellow, and seeks his company; the thief joins himself in society with those who are thieves, and every one labors to rub his vice upon as many as he can: yet never was it seen that two proud men could agree together: for none is a greater enemy to pride in any but himself, than a proud man; and that, because this is a vice that always

seeks superiority and pre-eminence, which a proud man cannot bear in any but himself.

Again, pride is always *contentious*, full of variance and strife. And it must needs be so: for, as tumors and swelling boils in the body are very sore, and the least touch makes them ache and rage; so these swelling, proud men, if they be but at all touched in their fame or interest, yea, or but in their fancy and opinion, presently rage and storm, and cannot bear, no not the least thing which they imagine to be an injury done them; for proud flesh is always tender. And, therefore, saith the wise man, Prov. xiii. 10: "Only by pride cometh contention." Now how unseemly a thing is this intractable humor! How infinitely contrary to the doctrine of Christ! The Apostle commands us, Phil. ii. 3, that "nothing be done through strife or vain glory; but, in lowliness of mind, let each esteem other better than themselves:" a temper, with which, when it shall please God to redeem religion from all the contempt and obloquy that is cast upon it, he will inspire the hearts of professors. I am sure I can see but very little of it abroad in the world: no; we are grown now to that pass, that he is thought the best man, who can find the most fault and make the most strife: and whosoever hath but wit enough to make a quick and smart reply, begins to think of setting up for himself and being the head of a sect and party, and conceits himself fit to be a judge and controller of all orders and of all offices, whether civil or sacred. For shame, oh Christians! boast not yourselves beyond your own line: if you have any place in the mystical body of Jesus Christ, keep yourselves within your proportion: know your own measures, and your own bounds. If thou be "an eye," and so canst guide the rest of the body; or if thou be "a hand," and so art useful for the service of the body; whatsoever be thy place, thy parts, thy gifts, whatsoever member thou art, be not a distorted one: let not pride blister thee; for, if thou give way to this kind of tumors, thou wilt be so far from being an ornament, that thou wilt only be a blemish and deformity to the body of Christ.

5. *Obedience to our magistrates and rulers*, doth exceedingly become the profession of the gospel.

See what the Apostle saith of it, 1 Pet. ii. 12: "Having your conversation honest among the Gentiles: that whereas they speak against you as evil doers, they may, by your good works which they shall behold, glorify God." But how may this be done? He presently subjoins, vv. 13, 14: "Submit yourselves to every

ordinance of man, for the Lord's sake: whether it be to the king, as supreme; or unto governors.....sent by him:" and observe the reason of this injunction, v. 15: "For so is the will of God, that, with well-doing, ye may put to silence the ignorance of foolish men." We ought still to walk by the same rule; and, by our submission and obedience to the powers which God hath set over us, make it appear, that religion is not faction; and that, in whatsoever man's law and God's do not contradict one another, our obedience to man's is but part of our obedience to God's; who hath commanded us to be "subject unto the higher powers," not only for fear and upon politic respects, but for conscience sake, and hath threatened all resistance and opposition with damnation: Rom. xiii. 1, 2.

6. It doth much adorn the doctrine of Christ, *to be just and upright in our dealings with men.*

It must needs be a most foul blemish to religion, when those, who profess it, shall pretend to high spiritual enjoyments, and yet neglect the duties of common and moral honesty; and be as unjust towards men, as they would be thought devout towards God. Would to God this blot were as easy to be wiped off, as it is obvious and easy to be observed! It hath made religion offensive in the nostrils of profane persons: and wrought in them such an inveterate hatred against all profession of godliness, that now the world flies and avoids all that makes show of it as dangerous people; and thinks it not safe to converse with those, who will dare once to talk of conversing with God. It is a shame and grief of heart, to hear the blasphemies which are daily uttered against holiness upon this very account: what is more common in men's mouths, than, "Have a care how you deal with such an one! Why, he is a saint; and will lay his hand upon his heart, and cheat you with a sigh and a 'Verily.' Well, of all men in the world, deliver me from having to do with a saint!" I would not mention such things as these to you, did I not know them to be ordinary and common reproaches. I beseech you, oh Christians, for the gospel's sake; if not for your own credit, yet if you have any respect left for that piety to which you pretend, if any sense of the reputation of that religion for which you profess you are ready to lay down your very lives, redeem its lost honor; and make it appear to all the world, that "Yea" and "Nay" is as true a dealer, as oaths and curses. Consider that dreadful place, 1 Thess. iv. 6: Let "no man go beyond nor defraud his brother in any matter: because that the Lord is the avenger of all such:" his

justice will certainly punish your injustice; and, though you may have an advantage, through the ignorance or easiness of those with whom you deal, to overreach them, yet, believe it, there is a day coming, wherein the false weights shall be themselves weighed, and the scanty measures be themselves meted by a standard that is infallibly true. Possibly, thy bargains and contracts may proceed so with those, who are persuaded to trust thee, because of thy profession, that they can have no advantage to recover their right by law: beware thou give them no occasion to rail at the gospel; nor to accuse themselves of folly, for thinking that a professor could be an honest man. Remember, there is a day coming, wherein a thousand witnesses shall be produced to testify what agreements and compacts thou hast made: all accounts shall be balanced, and so much found resting due, which thou shalt certainly pay, though not to those whom thou hast wronged, yet to the justice of God, who is the great and universal creditor: he is the avenger of all those, who, by wronging others in their estates, wrong them most of all their souls, and embitter their hearts against that religion and profession which deluded them. Especially, the scandal is so much the more gross, and the wound that religion receives the more incurable; when rapine, and extortion, and injustice, shall be done under pretense of advancing the gospel, and promoting the honor and glory of God: what is this else, but to bring him into a partnership with them, and to make him the receiver of their thefts? To transgress the law, that we might please the lawgiver; and to be wicked for God's sake? As if it were a service done to him, to make use of the first table of the law to break the second in pieces; and that, to be zealous towards God, required we should be unjust towards men. Let it appear, by your equity and justice towards all with whom you deal, that you do indeed believe that gospel which you profess; and which teacheth you to despise whatsoever this world offers, at the price, either of a sin against your religion, or of a reproach upon it.

7. It doth mightily "adorn the doctrine of God our Saviour," *not to be too rigorous and strict, in exacting what is our own.*

We ought, in some cases, *jure nostro cedere*, "to part with our own right;" and, rather than be contentious, to sit down by the loss of what others unjustly take from us. Whereas those, who will strain their right to the utmost extent, and still have recourse to the *summum jus*, "the most rigid exaction of whatsoever they can lay claim to," if they turn not justice into oppression, yet

they turn it into wormwood, as the prophet speaks, and make it bitter and displeasing: if they do not injury to others, yet certainly they injure themselves; and they injure the reputation of that religion they profess, which requires us not to stand upon little matters, but to give a meek concession one to another; and decides that he, who yields, both has the better cause and is the better man. And yet I do not condemn, where violence and injustice deprive us of what is necessary to sustain life; where what they take from us is more than we can well spare, without some notable inconvenience: I do not, I say, condemn those, who seek to recover their own by legal and allowed courses: in this case, I know "the law is good," if it be "lawfully" used: and therefore the Apostle (1 Cor. vi. 1: "Dare any of you, having a matter against another, go to law before the unjust, and not before the saints?") condemns not suing for our right, but suing for it in such a manner as to bring a shame and scandal upon the gospel: he forbids them, in any case of difference among themselves, to have recourse to the heathen tribunals for justice; but would have other Christians to take up the matter, and settle it between them: they must not bring such a disparagement upon religion, as that the heathen should ever know there were any differences and contentions among Christians; and therefore they must not plead for right in their courts, but choose out some of their most prudent brethren to be arbitrators and umpires between them, and submit to their award. So, now, it is a great discredit to Christianity, for those, who profess it, to be always quarreling about small things; and those little concerns, which though they may belong to them, yet it doth not belong to Christians to be contentious about them: when men shall stand upon every trivial right, and, rather than part with the least that they can call theirs, will embroil themselves and others in troublesome and endless suits; this argues, that they have not such mean thoughts of the world, as the doctrine of Christ requires, since they prefer any small and petty concern of it before Christian peace and quietness, which the gospel hath highly recommended.

Our Saviour hath given us our rule in this case: Matt. v. 40: "If any man will sue thee at the law, and take away thy coat, let him have thy cloak also;" and, in the preceding verse, "Resist not evil," but whosoever shall smite thee on thy right cheek, turn to him the other also."

Now because these places seem to contain something peculiar

to the doctrine of Christ, I think I shall not digress much, if I give you a brief comment and interpretation of them.

Resist not evil: that is, you, who are but private men, forbear to vindicate and right yourselves according to your own discretion: for passion and self-love may make you immoderate, and cause the revenge to be far greater than the offense. But, if the injury be greater than is fit to be borne, this doth not forbid you to have recourse to the magistrate, "for he beareth not the sword in vain." Revenge is an untamed thing: and it is well for mankind, that God hath challenged it to himself; "Vengeance belongeth unto me, saith the Lord:" and hath appointed magistrates, whom he calls "gods," committing to them the dispensation of temporal vengeance, reserving to himself the dispensation of eternal.

Yea, so far must we be from being judges in our own cause, that our Saviour adds, "Whosoever shall smite thee on thy right cheek, turn to him the other also;" which must not be understood as literally obliging us: for neither Christ himself, nor his Apostle Paul, invited the injuries which were done them; but rather sharply reproved those, who unjustly smote them. To turn the cheek, therefore, signifies nothing else, but to bear patiently the affronts which are done us; and so we have it, Lam. iii. 30: "He giveth the cheek to him, that smiteth him:" and so it is prophesied of Christ, Isa. l. 6, that he should give his back to the smiters, and his cheeks to them that plucked off the hair:" that is, he should suffer meekly and patiently those indignities, which were done unto him. All, that either the example or precept of Christ lays upon us, is, to bear such personal injuries calmly, and to be willing rather to suffer a second than to revenge the first. And this is far enough from that sense, which that scoffing apostate Julian put upon the words, when, commanding some Christians who were brought before him to be buffeted, he asked them in scorn, "why they did not follow the commands of their Master, who bid them turn the other cheek also?"

It follows: "If any man will sue thee at law, and take away thy coat, let him have thy cloak also." Neither must this be understood according to the letter, as if we were bound to reward those, who injure us: but, thus much it teacheth us; that, about small matters, things which we can easily be without or else easily procure, as a coat, or a garment, or the like, we should not be contentious; but rather recede from our right, than rigorously pursue it with strife and quarrels.

And, truly, this is a temper worthy of Christians. But how

rarely is it to be found! Pride, and passion, and self-interest have, now-a-days, eaten out the meekness, charity, and patience of a Christian spirit. Many hot professors there are, who, with Peter, are ready to pray for fire to come down from heaven, and consume those who offer them the least injury: and many, who are more ready to take from others what is justly theirs, than to yield any thing of their own to the unjust possession of others: many, who would rather smite on both cheeks, than suffer on one. Certainly Christian meekness is perished from the earth: and, if we would find any remarkable examples of it, we must turn over the ancient monuments of the primitive church; for our latter ages can furnish us with very few. Be persuaded, Christians, to bring this again into practice. Nothing will more commend your religion, nor set it off to the esteem of others, than this; for, when they shall see you bear notorious wrongs and affronts, with a conquering patience; when they shall see you part with your right rather than strive about it, and willingly forego those things wherein others place a great part of their content and felicity: what must the world conclude, but that certainly these men have a most excellent religion; a religion, doubtless, that assures them of far better and more excellent things than these, since it can prevail with them so easily to give up their concerns, which others so highly value! And, indeed, upon this very score, the Apostle sets it, Heb. x. 34: "Ye.....took joyfully the spoiling of your goods, knowing in yourselves that ye have in heaven a better and an enduring substance."

This is the last particular duty, on which I shall insist, as adorning the gospel. Many others there are, too numerous indeed to be severally discussed: as the filling up of our relations with the duties appertaining to them; self-denial, and a holy contempt of this world; charity and liberality, in relieving the necessities of others; a mutual forbearing to censure and judge one another, a sin that mightily abounds in this age, wherein every one thinks so much the better of himself, by how much the worse he thinks of others; a cheerful contented spirit under every dispensation of God's providence towards us: with several others, of which I cannot now stand to treat particularly.

III. All, that remains further to be done, is to EXHORT you thus to "adorn the doctrine of God our Saviour in all things;" that, as you have taken up the name and profession of the Christian religion, so you "would walk worthy" of both, and "of the vocation wherewith ye are called."

Sensible I am, that the temptations, which lie against a strict and gospel conversation, are many and discouraging. The careless examples of those, of whom we yet think well; the enmity of the world, which lies in wickedness, and will be sure to hate those, who, by being more severe and precise than themselves, upbraid their crimes; the reluctance of the flesh against a doctrine, which engageth us to subdue and mortify it; the rigor and difficulty of Christ's precepts, and vain hopes and presumptions of God's indulgence: are, all of them, such powerful orators, that he, who would carry it against all these, had need use very forcible motives; such as should not only persuade, but compel; and give such reasons, as should not only convince, but necessitate. But this not being in the power of man, I shall only show you how reasonable this exhortation is, notwithstanding all the prejudices that lie against it; and doubt not, but I shall speak so much on the behalf of strict piety and godliness, that murmurings and repinings shall be the only objection left, which I must leave to the efficacious persuasions of the Holy Spirit to remove and answer.

I will present and enlarge upon two thoughts: (1st) That the profession of the doctrine of Christ, is most rational; (2d) That it is most rational we should live according to the profession we make.

Upon the first I shall not dwell long, because I take it as granted by all of us. Yea, even those lewd, profane wretches, who hate the professors of religion and godliness and make them their sport and scorn, yet have not the profligate-impudence to avow that it is for their profession; but pretend it is for their hypocrisy, because they do not act consistently. Yea, the very devil himself is forced to acknowledge, that this is the doctrine, which shows unto us the way of life and salvation: Acts xvi. 17. All other religions in the world are nothing else but a mass of absurdities; which the devil could never have imposed on mankind, did he not love to make men fools, and to triumph over their reason as well as their souls.

i. That the profession of the doctrine of Christ *is most rational*, appears in three things.

I. *Its mysteries are most sublime and lofty.*

And, no wonder, for in them is contained the manifold wisdom of God. A Trinity in Unity; the incarnation of the Son of God; that the immortal God should die, and that, by his death, he should give life to the world; that his blood and sufferings should satisfy divine justice, and expiate our offenses; and, indeed, the whole

method of redemption, are mysteries, which far surmount the highest flight of reason: and yet are therefore the more rational, and do the more oblige us to believe them, because the same reason tells us, that that cannot be the wisdom of God, which may be comprehended by the weakness and foolishness of man.

2. *Its precepts are most holy and pure.*

As for the idolatrous worship of the heathen, it was barbarous, and commonly cruel or obscene; insomuch that Cato, though it was the only religion which he knew, was ashamed to be present at its solemnities. And, for the Jewish religion, so much of it as is not incorporated into the gospel, though there were nothing in it dishonest nor unlawful; yet it consisted in external observations, as circumcision, and sacrifices, and ablutions, which God in wisdom imposed upon them to amuse and busy them about the ceremonies of their own religion, who were so naturally prone to fall into the idolatry of others. But the doctrine of Christ teacheth us to worship him, who "is a Spirit, in Spirit and in truth; to employ ourselves in those works, which have an innate and inseparable goodness in them: it requires us not to circumcise our flesh, but our hearts; not to offer up the blood of bulls and goats unto God, but even our own, if it be necessary, in bearing witness to the truth and for the glory of God; not to wash our garments or our cups, but to "cleanse ourselves from all" pollutions both "of the flesh and spirit;" not scrupulously to abstain from some kinds of meats, but temperately to abstain from excess in any kind of them. This is the doctrine, which commands us to trust God with all our affairs, to take his promises for security, to love and fear him who is infinitely good and infinitely great, as the whole of that service which he requires from us. This alone reacheth to our thoughts, and to our affections: and lays the ax to the very root of our vices; judging those secret motions of our souls, which are unaccountable to any but God alone; condemning rash anger for murder, and an unchaste glance for adultery; and, penetrating into the inmost recesses of the heart, searches out and censures all the wickednesses that lie hidden there. And this shows that it is excellent above all other doctrines in the world, and only divine.

3. *Its rewards are most transcendent.*

"It is written, Eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, neither have entered into the heart of man the things which God hath prepared for them that love him." 1 Cor. ii. 9. Other religions either speak doubtfully of a future reward, or else promise such an one as is mean and sordid; sensual rewards, fitted for brutish religions: but our

Saviour Christ, after he hath commanded us to love God, promiseth us the eternal fruition of the God we love; promiseth no less for the reward of our love, than the object of it; assures us, that, after a short life spent here in his service, we shall be released from all the miseries and troubles of this life, and received up to a better, where all our hopes shall be crowned, our desires satisfied, all our past labors fully recompensed; where both soul and body, as they have been here partners together in serving God, so shall be partakers together of inconceivable happiness, our souls irradiated with the clear vision of God, our bodies irradiated with the brightness of our souls, and both forever to remain in eternal joy and glory.

And, judge now, whether it be not most rational to profess it. Were there any other, that were either so mysterious in its revelations, so pure in its precepts, or so excellent in its promises, the world were not much to be blamed if it should adhere unto that: but, when all others, as far as they differ from this doctrine of Christ, are but rude and beggarly elements, enjoining either what is impure or unnecessary; and promising rewards abject and sordid, some of which reason itself teacheth us to hate, and some to despise; then, certainly, it will follow that, if it be not folly to embrace and profess any religion at all, it is folly not to embrace and profess this. But, there are some deep impressions and characters engraven upon natural conscience; of the notion of a deity and a supreme power, who ought to be feared and served by us; and that it is altogether as necessary for us to be religious, in some way or other, as to be men. Many practical atheists there are, even among Christians themselves, who live as without God in the world: many such fools, who say in their hearts, "there is no God;" who, by having loose and erroneous opinions of a deity, serve him not as he requires: but, for a contemplative atheist, that shall set it down as his deliberate and resolved judgment, that there is no God, I very much doubt whether any instance can be given of such an one. Now, then, if to embrace some religion be so natural and rational, if all other religions in the world fall infinitely short of the excellence of the doctrine of Christ, it remains, that it is most rational for us to believe and profess this doctrine: to own it to all the world, that we are Christians; and that the Holy Scriptures, wherein are contained all the precepts of our religion, are the rule by which we are to walk. Let us not spare openly to profess this, and to make it our continual employment to discourse of the precepts and constitutions of our Saviour's doctrine, for fear of being scorned as professors or hated as hypocrites: for, certainly, if this

doctrine be in itself most excellent, the profession of it must needs be most rational; and they are only weak or malicious fools, who speak either against the one or the other.

ii. As the profession of the doctrine of Christ is most rational, so IT IS MOST RATIONAL TO LIVE ANSWERABLY TO SUCH A PROFESSION.

If it be most rational to profess it, then certainly it is most rational to practice it; unless we intend to be only wise in notion, and fools indeed. What excuse can such men plead for themselves, at the dreadful day of judgment? Must they not needs be self-condemned, condemned out of their own mouths and by their own profession, when those things, which they have owned to be most excellent, have been most neglected by them? Must they not be banished from that God and that Saviour, whom they professed with their lips, but denied in their lives?

Suffer me to lay before you these following considerations.

1. Consider, *that the profession, without the practice of religion, is but mere hypocrisy; and hypocrisy is the greatest folly in the world.*

The hypocrite dallies and plays with God; and thinks to conceal himself from those eyes, before which all things are open and bare: which is infinitely more foolish, than if one should go hide himself in a net. Thou infinitely disparagest that God, whom thou pretendest to serve: for, whilst thou liftest up thine eyes or thy hands to him, whilst thou flatterest him with thy mouth and yet thy heart is far estranged from him, thou dost but cast a reflection upon thy God; as one, that is so weak, as to be pleased and put off with fair words and empty shows. What base and unworthy apprehensions of his divine majesty must needs lie lurking in thy heart, whilst thou thinkest to cover over an ungodly, unholy life, with pretenses of piety and devotion! You agree with those who said, Ps. xciv. 7: "The Lord shall not see, neither shall the God of Jacob regard it." A hypocrite must deny, either the omniscience of God, or his justice; and, at least tacitly, conclude, either that he takes no notice of his sins, or that he will not punish them: and, so, is worse than an atheist: for, as Plutarch, though a heathen, speaks well, "that it would be a less injury done him, if any should absolutely deny that ever there was such a man as Plutarch, than if he should grant that indeed such an one there is, but that he is a fool, or unjust, or vicious; so, saith he, they speak not so ill of God, who deny there is such a being, as they do, who acknowledge him, but yet think him unwise and unholy." This, every hypocrite doth; who, while he

professes there is a God, and gives this God some external homage and service, and yet will dare to be loose and vain in his conversation, unjust and oppressive in his dealings, must needs believe, either that this God doth not see him, or will not revenge. But, "ye fools, when will ye be wise? He, that planted the ear, shall he not hear? He, that formed the eye, shall he not see? He, that chastiseth the heathen, shall not he correct? He, that teacheth man knowledge, shall not he know? The Lord knoweth the thoughts of man, that they are vain;" Ps. xciv. 8-11. Doth not thy religion represent God to thee as the searcher of the heart, and trier of the reins? As a God, who looks quite through thee, and discerns every beating of a thought and of a desire in thee? As an all-seeing and all-knowing God, who will bring every secret and hidden thing into open and public judgment? Live, then, according to these truths: live as always under the eye and observation of thy God; as one, who art accountable to him, not only for the more remarkable actions of thy life, but for every thought of thy heart, and every, the least, motion of thy soul; or, else, thou provest thyself to be a very fool, in not believing a religion which thou dost profess, or else in not practicing a religion which thou dost believe.

2. Consider: *Thy profession hath beautified and adorned thee*: it hath honored thee in the esteem of all serious and sober persons; who think well and speak well of thee, because of that profession and appearance of piety and godliness, which is in thee.

Now, as thy profession of the doctrine of Christ hath commended thee to the esteem and acceptance of good men; so do thou commend that doctrine to the esteem of evil and wicked men, by a life altogether suitable to the precepts of it. Sadden not the hearts of the children of God, by thy inconsistencies: they have received thee as a brother, and as a fellow-member with them of the same mystical body: approve thyself, by the continued holiness of thy life, to be worthy the repute which they give thee. Never think to maintain it by any hypocritical, dissembling arts: if thy profession be not sound, thy apostasy will be most certain. Keep up the credit of that religion among wicked men, which hath given thee so much credit among the good: let them never have an occasion, through scandals caused by thee, to open their black mouths, and to blaspheme the holy and reverend name of God.

3. Consider: *There is no other way left to redeem and vindicate*

the lost credit of your religion, but by a life suitable to the precepts of it.

Its honor lies bleeding, and is trampled in the dust by wicked men; who scorn and deride it, who triumph in its disgraces, and ask, "What now is become of your God, and of your godliness?" Christians, if you have any kindness for either, show the profane world, that, even in this languishing state of religion, yet there is beauty and luster enough left in it, to dazzle the eyes of all who look maliciously upon it.

(1) Redeem its credit, as to *the doctrines* of it.

Be not giddy, wavering, and uncertain; but sound in the faith: not "tossed to and fro with every wind of doctrine." Let not every glaring delusion, every skipping light, every flippant pretender to new notions, pervert your minds with "good words and fair speeches," which the Apostle gives as the character of a company of deceivers in his days, Rom. xvi. 18, and agrees but too well with a great many in ours. The errors and heresies, which have thus crept in, have torn the church in pieces; and each sect and opinion hath gained so many proselytes, that, between them, they have made a great many atheists; who, seeing that Christians are not yet agreed what to believe, will themselves believe nothing; and, knowing that many tenets in vogue are false and absurd, are strongly tempted to reject all, even these that are true: as Averroes, that learned commentator upon Aristotle, refused to become a Christian, because of that monstrous error of transubstantiation; and gave this reason for it, *Cum Christiani adorant quod comedunt, sit anima mea cum philosophis*: "Since the Christians eat what they adore, let my soul be among the philosophers." Now, Christians, retrieve this lost honor of your religion; and let it appear, by your holding "fast the form of sound words," that the doctrine of Christ is certain in the principles which it teacheth; and that the truths of it are built upon such clear evidence, that neither the subtlety of those who lie in wait to deceive, nor yet the malice of those who oppose them, could ever shake or make you forego your belief.

(2) Redeem the credit of religion, as to *the duties* which it commands.

Let it appear, that the most severe duties which it imposeth upon you, as mortification, self-denial, contempt of the world in its pleasures, profits, and honors, are not so unreasonable nor impossible, as the world takes them to be, by your constant and cheerful performance of them. Recover again that credit, which

others, or perhaps you yourselves, have formerly made it lose through a loose and vain conversation, by your holiness and strictness for the time to come. Convince the world, that dissipation is not necessary; and that the doctrine of Christ was not given, only to take up your more serious or melancholy hours: but that it is an universal rule for the guidance of your whole life, and that it hath an influence into all your actions. Till you do this, religion must needs suffer and bleed; and, I pray God, it may not utterly expire, and die among us.

4. Consider, for your encouragement, *that, if you thus adorn the doctrine of Christ, it will forever adorn you*; and, as you have made it glorious in the world, it will make you forever glorious in heaven.

This is the reward, which it promiseth. It will put a wreath of beams, a diadem of stars, a crown of glory upon your heads: "Then shall the righteous shine forth as the sun, in the kingdom of their father:" Matt. xiii. 43. And therefore those, who are careful to adorn the doctrine of Christ, are but like those, who put ornaments and hang jewels on those clothes, which themselves are to wear: the beauty and luster, which reflect from them all, redound to themselves. So we are promised, 1 Sam. ii. 30: "Them, that honor me, I will honor." And, to conclude, consider that place of the Apostle, Gal. vi. 16: "As many as walk according to this rule, peace be on them, and mercy and upon the Israel of God."

MISCELLANEOUS SERMONS.

IX.

A DISCOURSE ON WITHDRAWING FROM SUCH AS WALK DISORDERLY.

Now we command you, brethren, in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, that ye withdraw yourselves from every brother that walketh disorderly, and not after the tradition which ye received of us.
2 THESS. iii. 6.

THE command here uttered is as authoritative and pressing, as any we find in the whole book of God. In the words of the text we may observe both the matter and the form of this injunction.

First. The matter is, non-intercourse with wicked and profane Christians: who are here described to be such as walk disorderly: *Ατακτως*, that walk out of line, and keep not their ranks: a word borrowed from military discipline, which requires every soldier to march in his file, and to keep that order in which he was placed by his leader.

But, because there can be no irregularity, but a rule must first be presupposed; and no disorder, where no orders have been given: therefore the Apostle farther explains whom he means, and whom he would characterize by this note of walking disorderly; and those he tells us are they, who walk “not after the tradition which” they had “received:” *i. e.*, according to that doctrine, which was taught and delivered to them by the Apostles and ministers of Christ. Hence,

First. All, who commit *gross and flagitious wickedness* and who live in a course of *foul and notorious impieties*, are justly branded as those who walk disorderly.

Though they make profession of a holy faith, yet they contradict and enervate it by an unholy life: they take upon them the name of Christians, but yet live as without God and without Christ in the world. The doctrine of the gospel teacheth nothing but holiness and purity: it is a “doctrine according to godliness,” as the Apostle expresseth it, 1 Tim. vi. 3: all its precepts, exhortations, promises, and threatenings, the whole drift and design of it, tend only to make us more holy, and to impress upon us some outlines

of the purity of God our Heavenly Father. And, therefore, certainly, they who live in the commission of any scandalous crimes, must needs be guilty of most wretched disorder: they break their ranks, and fly out into open rebellion; yea, while they march under the banner of Christ, they fight against their own captain, and are to be reputed not his soldiers, but his enemies.

Secondly. All, who are *erroneous* and *heretical*, are disorderly persons.

Others transgress the rule, but these destroy it: they pluck up the very boundaries of the faith; and deny, not only their obedience to the truth, but the truth itself. And, though they may varnish over their damnable doctrines with fair shows and good speeches; and seem to be very mortified, spiritual, and heavenly persons, that thereby they may gain proselytes, and a veneration among them: yet are they far more pernicious and baneful to the Church of Christ, than those who are openly profane and scandalous. For, since the mind and understanding is the leading principle of man, if that be perverted, it must needs have a malign influence upon all the inferior faculties: our views are the guide of our actions; and, consequently, an error in judgment stops not there, nor rests only swimming and floating in the brain; but challengeth the same privilege which divine truth hath, to direct and govern our lives, and so, by a wretched improvement, becomes a transgression in practice too. He, who hath denied the faith, must, if he will be consistent with his own principles, refuse that obedience which is consequent upon it. As a vertigo, and dizziness in the head, causeth a reeling and staggering motion in the feet; so those, who are vertiginous and giddy in their opinions, must of necessity be disorderly in their conversations: they can never walk steadily by a rule, which they deny to be such. And thus error is not only error, but an accumulative mischief: it is error, and wickedness too.

Thirdly. And not only these, but all *turbulent* and *factionous* persons are disorderly walkers.

Such who rend the Church with schisms and divisions: and despise government and order, only because it is not of their own devising: and are so full of new models and new platforms of discipline in their fancies, that, in the meanwhile, they have made such wide breaches in the peace and unity of the Church, that I doubt it would much puzzle not only their self-asserted wisdom, but the wisdom of an angel himself, to compose and heal them.

Fourthly. Not only these, but also all idle and impertinent

tattlers, all slothful *tale bearers*; who are very busily idle in gadding from house to house, like a company of giddy flies buzzing about; and who have no other employment, but very solemnly to whisper nothing in every man's ear they meet: these also are branded by the Apostle, as disorderly persons.

Indeed, a great part of this chapter is spent about these: especially v. 11: "We hear that there are some which walk among you disorderly, working not at all, but are busy bodies;" very busy they are, but yet do no work: unprofitable burdens to the earth; and good for nothing in the world, but only to keep the air in motion.

Now from all these sorts of disorderly persons, we ought to withdraw ourselves; to have no converse nor society with them.

Secondly. The *form* of the injunction before us, shows it to be as express and urgent, as any contained in the Scriptures. "We command you, brethren." And the authority of this command is most absolute and sovereign: "In the name of our Lord Jesus Christ:" *i. e.*, we command you by the authority of Christ, or Christ commands you by us, that "ye withdraw yourselves from every brother that walketh disorderly."

And here we may observe two things:

First. That a mere external profession of Christianity, though it be overborne and contradicted by a disorderly and sinful life, is here made by the Apostle a sufficient title to a fraternity with true Christians.

Though they walk disorderly, and are dissolute in their lives, and erroneous in their tenets; yet, while they own the Head, Christ Jesus, and make profession of his name, they are, you see, acknowledged and called brethren. They all belong to the same family, the Church, till they are solemnly cast out from thence. And not the only dutiful and obedient are so called, but the untractable and rebellious: "Withdraw.....from every brother that walketh disorderly."

Secondly. The Apostle commands them to be more cautious in abstaining from converse with a disorderly, lewd, or erroneous Christian, because he is a brother, than if he were an utter stranger to the commonwealth of Israel, and a sworn enemy as well to the profession as to the practice of Christianity: "Withdraw.....from every brother," rather than from every other person, "that walketh disorderly."

To this purpose it is a most remarkable place, and well worthy our most serious consideration; 1 Cor. v. 9-12: "I wrote to you

in an epistle, not to company with fornicators. Yet not altogether with the fornicators of this world, or with the covetous, or extortioners, or with idolaters; for then must ye needs go out of the world. But now I have written unto you, not to keep company, if any man, that is called a brother, be a fornicator, or covetous, or an idolater, or a railer, or a drunkard, or an extortioner; with such an one, no not to eat." It seems, that, in a former epistle, which perhaps is not now extant, the Apostle had forbidden the believing Corinthians all converse with wicked men: which, possibly, might occasion some trouble and perplexity in them, because, in those early days of the Church, the number of Christians was so small, that the very necessities of life required their converse with their heathen neighbors, who were idolaters, fornicators, drunkards, and generally as wicked as wickedness itself could make them. And, therefore, to relieve their minds of this scruple, the Apostle writes to them again; and distinguishes wicked persons into two sorts: such, as visibly belonged to the world, and were professed heathen, whom he calls the fornicators and idolaters of this world; and such, as belonged to the visible Church, and were Christians by an external profession, but yet continued in their old sins, though not in their old Gentilism. "Now," saith the Apostle, "I meant not that you should wholly abstain from having any converse with wicked heathen, though their crimes be very vile and flagitious: for, since the greatest part of the world, and of those among whom you live, are heathen, the necessities of human life require that you should have commerce and dealing with them. You must go out of the world, *i. e.*, you cannot possibly live, if you be wholly interdicted their society; and debarred from those, with whom your natural relations, and secular affairs, interests, and dependencies, are so closely interwoven. But there is another sort of wicked persons: those, who are impious and scandalous Christians; those, who are called brethren, who make profession of the same common faith and own the same Lord and Saviour; and yet their lives are as profane, as their profession is holy. From these you ought to withdraw yourselves: "If any man, that is called a brother, be a fornicator, or covetous, or an idolater, or a railer, or a drunkard, or an extortioner; with such an one, no not to eat."

You see, then, that the command is most express; and that, which the Apostle urgeth with a great deal of vehemence and earnestness. And, in discussing it, I shall state the duty, and show you how far we ought to withdraw from those that walk

disorderly: give you some reasons, why we ought to do it: and make application of all.

I. In STATING THE DUTY, I must premise, that our condition is much different from those primitive Churches to whom the Apostle then wrote. They lived mingled among heathen and infidels, who made up far the more populous part of all their cities: then, the Church was in the world, as a little leaven in a great quantity of meal, as our Saviour compares it, Matt. xiii. 33. But now, since the progress and spreading of the gospel, the world (at least this part of it) is come into the Church: we live, we converse with few or none, but those, who are called brethren; and are all Christians and the people of God, at least by external profession and vocation. And, therefore, I will

i. Show you THE CASES, WHEREIN WE ARE NOT BOUND TO WITHDRAW FROM THOSE, WHO WALK DISORDERLY.

1. In the first place, As the primitive Christians might lawfully converse with the heathen in managing their civil affairs in traffic and commerce, and whatsoever else was for the necessity or convenience of their subsistence; *the like converse may we lawfully maintain with ungodly and dissolute Christians.*

For the reason in this case is the very same. The Apostle allowed them to associate with the heathen, though they were vile and wicked; because most of those, among whom they lived were heathen; and, if this were not granted, there were no living in the world. And, therefore, now that we live among none but those who are Christians; though the greatest part of them should be supposed to be overgrown with vice and notoriously wicked and profane; swearers, drunkards, unclean and covetous persons: yet we may lawfully converse with them about the necessary concerns of life; otherwise, still the same inconveniencies would press us, that we must go out of the world. We may trade and traffic with them, and perform all offices of civility and courtesy, which do not either engage us unto or demonstrate too great a familiarity and intimacy with them. Yea, the very same business connection, which was allowed the primitive Christians with their heathen neighbors, may, by the parity of reason, in all circumstances be allowed us with dissolute and disorderly Christians.

2. We are not so far to withdraw ourselves from them, *as to violate the bonds of nature: or those respects which we owe, according to the relations in which we stand towards them.*

A godly son must not withdraw himself from under the government and authority of a wicked father: and those, who are unequally yoked to wicked and dissolute persons, must not therefore assume a liberty, either of relinquishing that relation or of neglecting the duties of it, because the other is lewd and licentious. Servants must not therefore reject the commands of their masters, and refuse obedience to them because they are wicked: for this would put all the world into confusion and rude disorder. Dominion is not founded in grace. And it would be a chaotic world, if inferiors should acknowledge no superior, but those, who are truly and cordially subject unto God; if servants should obey no master, but such as obey their Master Jesus Christ; if yoke-fellows should not acknowledge one another, unless they were mystically and spiritually married unto Christ; if children should not be subject to their parents, unless their parents themselves were the children of God. No: we ought to converse with all persons, be they never so loose and dissolute, according to the relations in which we stand unto them: and that also, with the greatest intimacy and familiarity, and most endeared friendship that such relations do challenge from us. For the same authority, which hath commanded us to withdraw from every brother who walketh disorderly, hath commanded us likewise to love our relations: and, therefore, though they should remain obstinately wicked after all our endeavors and persuasions to reclaim them, we ought not to withdraw either our persons or our affections from them.

3. We are not to withdraw from any wicked person, *if we have great hopes and strong probabilities of reforming and reclaiming him by our converse.*

For this is to act the physician: and with whom should such an one be most frequent, but with the diseased? And therefore we find that our Lord Jesus Christ himself, who, by the Apostle, is said to be "separate from sinners," Heb. vii. 26, was calumniated and traduced on this very account, because he kept so much company and society with them; and was accused by the supercilious and blind Pharisees, who could not distinguish between the leprous and the physician, as a sinner himself, because so familiar with sinners; Matt. xi. 19: "The Son of Man came eating and drinking;" *i. e.*, he demeaned himself affably and courteously to all, accommodating himself to all their lawful actions; and "they say, behold a man gluttonous, and a wine-bibber, a friend of publicans and sinners." And so, again, when they were captiously censuring

him for eating with publicans and sinners, Matt. ix. 12, he justifies this action, which seemed so obnoxious to them, by the charity of his intention: "They that be whole need not a physician; but they that are sick:" he was conversant among diseased persons, with a design of healing them; and among wicked persons, with a design of converting and reforming them. And, certainly, the same charity may justify our conversing with such: for, should all serious and pious persons withdraw from them, it would only leave those diseases, which are in themselves dangerous, altogether desperate and incurable: and it would fare with them, as too often with many poor wretches in the plague, who perish miserably; not so much from the malignity of their disease, as only for want of help and assistance.

Two cautions, however, are here necessarily to be observed.

(1) That thou thyself be very watchful over thine own heart, and over thine own actions, when thou art in wicked company, even with a design of doing them good.

Else, perhaps, thou mayst thyself get infection, while thou intendest to cure it: for the soundest Christian hath corrupt humors in him, which are very apt to take the contagion. The best preservative you have is your utmost care and caution, which if you do in the least slacken, it is great odds but you will be involved in their guilt and sin; either by being drawn by their examples into the same acts, or by conniving at them when it may be fit and necessary to reprove them.

(2) That you venture not into wicked company, if you have not very probable grounds to hope, that your presence among them will be an occasion to hinder their sins.

Which ordinarily you may with reason expect, if either you have prudence enough to divert them: or, authority enough to fright them: or, reverence enough to overawe and shame them. One of these three qualifications is absolutely necessary for every one, who would converse with wicked men to their benefit and advantage: either prudence, or authority, or reverence and respect. But, for any other Christian, though he be never so zealous and come fortified with never so good intentions and purposes, he is no fit man for such society. For,

[1] It is hazardous, whether he shall be able to preserve his conscience safe, where he shall be borne down and outbraved by boisterous sinners; who will scorn to be controlled by a person, in whom there is nothing venerable but that holiness and piety, which they despise and contemn. And so he will lie under a

temptation to do many unbecoming, if not sinful actions; only, that he may not be exposed to their scoffs and injuries.

[2] If he preserve his conscience safe, yet his very zeal and godliness will be made a prey to their taunts; and the weak, inefficacious attempts, which he makes to check their sins, will but the more enrage and embolden them. They will but sin the more, to beat him quite out of countenance; and that, out of mere despite that a person, whom they so much contemn, should take upon him to prescribe laws and orders to them: and so, instead of physicians, they will, out of a mistaken charity, prove only murderers to their brother. And this I have frequently observed in the world to be the sad and woeful issue of it. And therefore you, who have reason to suspect, either the frailty of your nature, or the weakness of your parts and authority, beware that you venture not into such company: the best security thou canst have, is, to withdraw thy foot far from them: and to disengage thyself as soon as possible, if at any time thou art accidentally cast upon them: for, either they will wound thy conscience, or thou wilt but occasion them to wound their own the deeper. But, if God hath endowed thee with such courage, prudence, and authority, that thou canst baffle and shame the impudence of wicked men, know, that it is thy duty and a work of charity, at fit times and seasons, when God's providence shall cast thee upon it, to converse with evil men: thou goest among them but to part a fray; wherein, though they all seem merry and very good friends, yet they are desperately stabbing, and wounding, and murdering one another by their sins: and, if thou canst either hinder any one of those blows, or cure any of those wounds, thou hast done a kind office to their souls, and an acceptable service unto God.

4. *We are not to withdraw and separate from wicked men in the service of God.*

We may join with them in prayer, in hearing the word, yea and in all the ordinances of Jesus Christ; and be glad that they will so far own religion, as to give it any, though but an outward and complimentary reverence and respect.

The great scruple, I know, is concerning that most sacred ordinance of the Lord's Supper; and that place before-mentioned, 1 Cor. v. 11, is here much insisted on, "with such an one, no not to eat." Whence they infer, that, if they may not eat common bread with such as are drunkards, railers, extortioners, or unclean, at their own tables; then, much less may they eat sacred bread with them at the Lord's table. And this passeth as an unanswerable argument

to justify separation from them in this institution. This I answer, as follows.

(1) Jesus Christ himself eat his supper in communion with one, whom he knew to be a wicked person; yea, and whom he had branded with the black name of devil: Luke xxii. 20, 21: Mark xiv. 23.

Which, were it needful, could be demonstrated as plain as evidence itself can make any thing. But,

(2) Let it be supposed that such have no right to partake of that holy ordinance; yet you ought not to withdraw yourselves because of their admission, but endeavor rather to remove them.

If you do not know them to be guilty, you are most uncharitable, both in suspecting them, and in separating only upon a suspicion. If you certainly know their guilt, have you admonished them? If you have admonished them both secretly and before witnesses, and yet they still persevere in their sins, have you accused them, and before the Church brought convincing proofs of the scandal which they have given? If thou hast used this plain course, which our Lord Christ himself hath commanded towards an offending brother, Matt. xviii. 15-17, there will be no need of separating; but, by this means, thou shalt either remove and eject him who hath given the offense, or clear thine own soul, and not partake of his sin in partaking of the same holy ordinance. If otherwise, if thou hast neither reprov'd the offender in private, nor accused him in public, how darest thou separate from the communion of the Church of Christ? How darest thou contradict his express order and command; yea, and think thyself the more holy and pure for doing so? Is this conscience? Is this religion? Is this strict piety and godliness? Nay, rather let me tell thee, it is a piece of Pharisaic pride, to separate because of their sins; and yet never reprove, never accuse them for their sins.

(3) Suppose we may not eat familiarly with such at their own tables; yet it is no consequence to argue hence, that therefore we may not eat with them at the table of the Lord.

And the reason is, because the one is of choice; the other is of necessity, till they be cut off from the Church. I may choose my acquaintance and familiar friends with whom to converse at pleasure; and if I choose those, who are wicked and ungodly, without any charitable design upon them, I then sin, and show myself to be such an one as delights in vain and wicked persons: but I cannot choose church members, nor say I will communicate with this man, but not with this, till they are cut off from the

body of Christ, unless I design to make a rent and schism in the unity of it.

(4) To cut the sinews of this objection: I answer, that, upon the grounds already premised, it is as lawful for us to eat with wicked and disorderly Christians, as it was for the primitive Christians to eat with the idolatrous and wicked heathen.

For the state and circumstances of the Church are altogether changed; and we have now none to converse with, but those, who are by name and profession Christians. And, therefore, though they should be guilty of the same sins as the old heathen were, yet, upon the very same account that the Apostle allowed his converts to eat with idolaters, upon the very same may we be allowed to eat with loose Christians, when proper circumstances seem to require it from us. So that if we take this prohibition of the Apostle literally, we may safely affirm that it was but temporary: or if we take it analogically, and by rules of proportion; so it forbids us nothing but an unfit and unnecessary familiarity with wicked persons; and so, indeed, we hold its obligations to be perpetual.*

ii. Let us now consider the positive part of this duty; and show you, IN WHAT CASES, AND HOW FAR, WE ARE BOUND TO WITHDRAW FROM THEM.

1. *We are bound to withdraw ourselves from all unnecessary converse and correspondence with wicked and ungodly men.*

We are not to make them our bosom friends, nor our chosen intimates, nor to have society with them, more than either the necessity of our affairs, or a charitable design of doing them good exacts from us. And this I take to be the genuine and true import of the text. Associate not with any brother that is vicious and demoralized; *i. e.*, be not his intimate and familiar: give him no countenance by seeking or embracing his acquaintance. We ought not to choose nor select such to make them our friends, or our confidants. But if, upon other accounts, we are obliged to converse with them, then, although the letter of this command reacheth no farther than this, yet by the same reason we are obliged

2. *To withdraw from them our inward respect and esteem:* setting them low in our affections, and accounting but meanly and slightly of them.

This the Psalmist gives as a character of those, "who shall dwell in God's holy hill:" Ps. xv. 4. "In whose eyes a vile person is contemned." They have learnt to judge of things and persons as they are. And, though they may have many great advantages of

wit and parts to adorn them, yet these things dazzle not their eyes : but they know that it is but an "ignis fatuus," which makes all this blaze ; a thing made up of earthy and sordid vapors, whose extraction is base, whose employment pernicious, and whose end deplorable. Alas ! how can he highly value a company of slaves, whom he sees busily toiling in the devil's drudgery ? How can he but nauseate those swine, which wallow in their mire ; and those dogs, when he sees them licking up their vomit ! He knows, that such as these are vile in the sight of God ; and it would be a strange disagreement if they should be dear to him, whose affections ought to be conformed to his heavenly Father's.

3. *We ought to manifest this inward dislike, by our outward demeanor ;* and to let them know by some overt acts, that they are a company of persons for whom we have no great esteem nor value.

We ought to put a vast difference, between our converse with those who are sober and serious Christians, and those who are dissolute and profane. Indeed, if we have no great love nor esteem for them, this difference will soon appear of itself : for let two pious Christians converse together, how presently are their souls touched with a mutual sympathy ! and that holiness, which knits them both unto Jesus Christ, knits them likewise one to another : their communion is sweet and free ; no reservedness, no disgusts, but as full of joy, as it is of innocence ; and their souls seem to be as much one another's, as their own. But let a person, whose vices have made him odious, join them ; and his presence (like that, as they say, of evil spirits) brings a damp and oppression with it : presently, their joy is stifled, their freedom restrained : they shrink and retire within themselves ; and treat him with a visible coldness, and an inward constraint. And, indeed, we ought to show a kind of aversion towards wicked men, when we are in their company ; that it may appear, that neither they, nor their converse, are acceptable to us ; and that we are, as it were, out of our proper element, whilst we are engaged in their society. So we find that holy David resolves to witness his dislike, whenever he should chance to be with evil men : Ps. xxxix. 1 : "I will keep my mouth with a bridle, while the wicked is before me ;" *i. e.*, I will lay a restraint upon myself : my words shall be but few and sparing, that it may appear such company is not at all grateful to me.

But, here, let us beware of running into extremes. For many men may be apt to take that for the zeal of their spirits, which indeed is only the frowardness of their temper : and so, instead of a holy dislike, may express only a proud disdain of wicked men ;

and, by the sourness of their humor, fright them, not only from their converse, but from their religion too, which they are ready to censure as the only thing that makes them thus crabbed and ill-natured. And, therefore, to both these particulars of lessening our love and esteem, and the signs and testimonies of it towards wicked men, we must add these following cautions :

(1) Thou oughtest heedfully to distinguish between thy brother's person and his vices ; and neither love, nor hate, the one for the other.

For he, who loves his person for his vices, is a devil : he, who loves his vices for his person, is a flatterer : he, who hates his vices for his person, is a murderer : and he, who hates his person for his vices, is unchristian and uncharitable. And, therefore, Lev. xix. 17, God forbids us to hate our brother in our heart, although he be such an one, whose frequent sins may give us frequent cause sharply to rebuke him. Hence St. Austin gives us a good rule ; *Nec propter vitium oderit hominem, nec amet vitium propter hominem : sed oderit vitium, amet hominem* : "Neither let any hate the man, on account of his vice ; nor love his vice, for the man's sake : but hate the vice, and love the man." For, indeed, couldst thou but cure his vice, there is nothing in thy brother but what is lovely and amiable. It is, I confess, a very difficult matter to carry our love and our hatred with so even a hand, that they shall not one intrench upon the other's object. And, truly, I know but one only method how it may be done ; and that is, by using our utmost endeavors to reclaim and reform our brother : for, thereby, we do, at once, both express our hatred against his sins, by seeking to root them out and destroy them ; and our dearest love to his person, by seeking his eternal welfare and salvation. But, believe it, if we take any other course of expressing our dislike, than what in probability may be beneficial to our brother and tend to reduce him, we do not only declare our hatred to his vice, but to his person, from which we ought never to withdraw our tenderest affection : and, therefore, to rejoice at his failings ; to report them needlessly to his disparagement ; to upbraid him spitefully with them, not seeking his amendment, but his shame and our revenge ; is too true a sign, that, be our hatred never so great against his vices, yet it is not little also against his very person.

(2) Another caution is this. We must not so far withdraw the testimonies of our respect and esteem from the most wicked person on earth, as to deny him that civility and respect, which is due unto his place : nor to refuse him the offices of humanity, which

that common nature of which we are all partakers, doth challenge from us.

The one is not religion, but rudeness; and shows not so much zeal, as want of breeding: the other is barbarous and unnatural; with which the Satirist justly taxeth the stubborn Jews, saying, they would not be obliging to one not of their religion.

Non monstrare vias, quæsitum ostendere fontem. JUVEN. SAT.

Nor point the way, nor the sought fountain show.

But, certainly, religion doth not teach men to be surly and churlish; but it is the most gentle, the most obliging and affable thing in the world. It is beautiful to see Christians kind and respectful to all, in their deportment; taking all opportunities to be helpful and beneficial, even towards those, with whom they refuse familiarity. This their ready willingness to do good to the worst of men, will be a most effectual means to bring up a good report upon their profession; when it shall appear, that nothing but their conscience and their religion prompt them to it. Our outward deportment towards others is to be regulated by outward respects, as well as our inward veneration by inward excellencies. I owe not so much ceremony to a mean man, although truly gracious; as I do to a great man, though impious and profane: the one shall have my hat; the other shall have my heart. Certainly, it is but a sullen humor, and not religion, that teacheth any to deny accustomed and due respects. Festus, though an unbeliever, shall be "most noble;" as well as Joseph of Arimathea "an honorable counsellor," though it be added in his title, that he "waited for the kingdom of God." Though some wicked men should be equally great in crimes, as in power; yet I ought to pay their place and their rank my reverence, whilst I reserve my veneration and esteem for the poorest saint.

(3) When, I say, that we ought to withdraw our love and affections from wicked and ungodly persons, we must observe that there is a twofold love: a love of benevolence, whereby we wish well to the party beloved, and endeavor to promote his good; and a love of complacency and friendship, whereby we take delight in him. We ought to love all wicked men, whosoever they are, with a love of benevolence; cordially desiring their good and welfare; laboring, as much as in us lies, to promote it: but, generally, we ought not to love them with a love of complacency, delight, and friendship.

(4) We are to withdraw from wicked men, our love and the expressions of it: not absolutely, so as not to love nor esteem them at all; but only comparatively, so as to love and esteem them less. And that, in a twofold comparison.

[1] If we are not related to them, to esteem them far less than we do others, who are truly sober and serious Christians.

Our delights should be in such, as are the excellent ones upon earth: and we should, in all our demeanor, put a visible difference between our deportment towards the one and the other, that it might be seen, that our converse with the one is only out of charity or necessity, but with the other out of delight and a free unconstrained choice.

[2] If we are nearly related to them, and by that bond are perhaps obliged to love them more than any other persons in the world; yet also we must love them less in comparison, if not to others, yet to themselves.

There are some natural and some civil relations in which we stand, that challenge from us a love and esteem of the highest nature, though the persons be never so wicked and impious: and if we do not love and honor them above all other persons in the world, we sin. And yet we must love them comparatively less, because of their vices; not, indeed, less than other persons; but less than we should else love, and honor, and esteem themselves, were they truly virtuous and holy. Natural and civil relations are a strong and inviolable bond of love and respect: but, yet, where true grace and real godliness are to be found, there the union of our souls should be closest and most endearing; and this double cord, both of grace and nature, should knit us more closely to them, than where only one of these doth tie the knot: and we should, in a wise and obliging manner, let them know, that, though we respect and value them as they are, above all earthly enjoyments; yet our respect, love, and valuation of them would be far greater than it is, could we but prevail upon them to be other than they are.

II. The second general division is, to give you some REASONS, which may enforce this duty upon you.

And, indeed, it being a duty that seems so rough and morose to the too sociable and compliant humors of most men, it had need be backed with very cogent motives and reasons. And such, I am sure, can be produced.

i. IT IS AN ACT OF THE GREATEST LOVE, AND MERCY, THAT WE CAN SHOW TO THEIR PERSONS.

We are not to separate from them out of spite or peevishness, but out of good-will and charity; it being the last, and probably the most effectual means to reclaim them: and therefore, as the Church is empowered by Christ to draw forth its last weapon against obstinate and contumacious sinners, and to cut them off from its fellowship by the dreadful sentence of excommunication (which power is given her, not for the destruction of any, but for their edification; that they may thereby be brought to a sight of their sins, and repent for them); so also that personal power, which every private Christian hath over his own converse, to refrain from the society of such as walk disorderly, should be used by him (with the rules and cautions before prescribed) towards those, who are otherwise incorrigible, as a charitable means to reclaim them from their sinful ways. For, when they see themselves thus banished, and, as it were, excommunicate from the company of all those who are sober and serious, they may be moved to reflect upon their actions, and to return both to themselves and to God: and therefore the Apostle gives us this command, 2 Thess. iii. 14: "Note that man, and have no company with him, that he may be ashamed." And, indeed, if a man be not altogether profligate in wickedness, if he be not wholly lost to shame, it must needs make him blush to think, that he should be grown such a vile wretch, that all good men should carefully shun the very air in which he breathes, and the places which he haunts, as contagious and infectious. The truth is, whatsoever company a wicked man keeps, it proves a snare to him: for, by his familiarity with evil men, he is but tempted to more and greater sins; and, by good men's familiarity with him, he will be shrewdly tempted to security and self-confidence under his sin and guilt: he will argue with himself, that, "Certainly, such men, who are reputed holy and pious, would not converse with me as they do, did not they think well and entertain a good opinion of me. Were such and such sins so black and horrid, as some few sour people would fain persuade me, these godly people would shun my company, as unworthy of them; and would avoid me, as a person both noisome and dangerous: and therefore, doubtless, I may keep my sins, and yet go hand in hand with them to heaven; for, if we part not by the way, I hope we shall not part at the journey's end." And so they are hardened in their sins; and you, by keeping company with them and not reproving them, prove the ruin and destruction

of their souls; whereas, did you but withdraw yourselves from their society, it is probable that the very shame of seeing themselves forsaken, and left as it were lonely and desolate in the world, would at length work in them a hatred of those crimes, which they see so detested by others. And thus we should only leave them for a season, that we might afterwards enjoy them forever.

ii. Consider THE GREAT DANGER YOU ARE IN, OF BEING YOURSELVES DEFILED WITH THE CONVERSE OF WICKED AND UNGODLY MEN.

There is no plague, no leprosy in the world, so catching, as that of sin: for,

1. *Our hearts themselves are naturally corrupt.*

There are in us the latent and lurking seeds of all manner of wickedness: we should therefore beware how we venture an evil heart amongst evil examples. The devil hath a strong party within us, that watch all advantages to betray us: and, if thou wilt needs be gadding abroad, to observe the manners and fashions of the world, beware thou be not caught and ravished, and sent home with a wound and dishonor. Gen. xxxiv. 2.

2. *It is the glory and impious pride of wicked men, to impart their vices to as many as they can.*

They would fain make all like themselves: and it is much to be doubted, if thou venturést among them, that, as thou art more prone to be infected than they are to be cured, (for sin is natural both to them and us, but so is not grace); so also they will show more zeal and forwardness to demoralize and corrupt thee, than thou wilt to reform and reclaim them. Nay, indeed, it cannot be otherwise: for they will look upon thy sobriety and seriousness, as a severe upbraiding of them for their dissoluteness and profaneness; and, so, to ease themselves of such a troublesome reflection, would fain banish that virtue which reproacheth them, and therefore will be earnestly persuading thee to do as they do and be as they are. And, I believe, the very best Christians will find it a very hard task, when they are engaged in such company, to keep themselves pure and unspotted; when they have so many disadvantages against them, as an evil nature within to prompt them, and evil examples and enticements without to allure them. In this respect, certainly, there is not so much danger in conversing with wicked heathen and infidels, as there is with wicked Christians: for, as physicans observe, that diseases sooner infect those

who are of kindred blood, than those who are strangers one to another; so is it, likewise, in the moral diseases of the soul: the vices of a brother, of one who is called a Christian, are more dangerous and contagious, than of a stranger and alien; inasmuch as the sameness of profession is apt to make us less suspicious and wary of his actions. And, when we both own and embrace the same religion, we are apt, first to favor, and then to imitate his deeds: and therefore the Apostle commands us, especially to "withdraw....from every brother that walketh disorderly:" and that, if not out of charity to him, yet at least we should do it out of care to our own souls; for we are in danger to be led aside by their evil examples. And how many have returned from such converse with bleeding consciences! their poor souls have long lain languishing under those wounds, which they have received in the house of their friends; as the Prophet speaks, Zech. xiii. 6.

3. *Our society with dissolute and wicked persons may not only involve us in their guilt, but also in their punishment.*

And, indeed, it is but reason and equity, that we should be partners with them in the one, as well as in the other: and therefore we have that threatening, Prov. xiii. 20: "A companion of fools shall be destroyed." Nay, though we could keep ourselves from their crimes, yet our society with them may justly expose us to their plagues: and that, because our very converse with them is sin enough to provoke divine justice against us; which, finding us in the same herd, may well drive us to the same slaughter. And therefore we see how earnestly Moses cautions the Israelites, to separate from the rebellious company of Korah, and his associates; Numb. xvi. 26: "Depart, I pray you, from the tents of these wicked men, and touch nothing of theirs, lest ye be consumed in all their sins:" and so, again, Rev. xviii. 4, where the destruction of the mystical Babylon is foretold, God warns his people to come out of her; "Come out of her, my people, that ye be not partakers of her sins, and that ye receive not of her plagues." And therefore you ought, for your own interest and security's sake, to abandon the company of wicked men, unless perhaps you intend to perish with them for company.

4. *If no other punishment overtake you, yet the very society of such must needs be a continual burden and vexation to all those, who are truly conscientious and tender-hearted Christians.*

So that, if not for your security, yet at least for your own content and satisfaction, you should think yourself obliged to desert the company of those, who must needs be a perpetual grief and torment

to you. Thou, who hast any reverence for the holy name of God; any veneration for the mysteries of the gospel, and the truths which thou professest; any love and esteem for piety and godliness; any respect for temperance and sobriety; with what pleasure canst thou converse with those, who impiously tear and rend the holy name of the great God with their hellish oaths and curses? How enjoy the society of those who deride piety; and all who profess or practice it? Who make it their business to overthrow the faith, and expose the sacred oracles of God and mysteries of religion, upon which all thy hopes for the future are built, to public scorn and contempt? Who are only witty when they are profane, and learned when they are sceptical? Whose mouths are frothed with lasciviousness, and whose most familiar dialect is ribaldry? Who are continually abusing themselves and God's better creatures, by their excess and intemperance; and boast of it as a heroic achievement, how many they have overcome by their strength and endurance? Are these companions, fit for thee, who callest thyself a Christian, and makest profession of that religion which requires purity and exact holiness from all its votaries? Canst thou find any pleasure in such society? If thou canst, thou thyself art not only one of them, but worse: for so the Apostle accounts those, who have pleasure in such wicked persons: Rom. i. 32. But, if thou hast but one spark of grace under all that flame of devotion of which thou makest a show, thou wilt be so far from taking delight in such company, that it will be the greatest burden and vexation of thy life: and, when thou hast heard thy God dishonored, thy religion abused, thy holy gospel denied or derided; and seen all the abominations to which wrath, lust, and luxury prompt those, who are slaves to these foul passions; thou wilt return home with a sad and heavy heart, and find abundant cause to weep over their sins, though thou hast reprov'd them, or thine own if thou hast not. And what a folly then is it, voluntarily to make thine own life uncomfortable; and, by seeing and hearing, vex thy righteous soul from day to day with their unlawful deeds! Indeed, if thou art constrained to dwell amongst such, it is thy affliction; but it is thy sin, if it be thine own choice. It were altogether as pleasant an abode, to dwell among lions, and bears, and tigers, and all the ravenous beasts of the forest. See how David complains of it, Ps. lvii. 4: "My soul is among lions; and I lie even among them that are set on fire, even the sons of men, whose teeth are spears and arrows, and their tongue a sharp sword:" and see how passionately he bemoans himself, that he was under the

sad necessity of conversing with such persons; Ps. cxx. 5: "Woe is me, that I sojourn in Mesech, that I dwell in the tents of Kedar!" If thou art constrained to this unequal converse, either through God's providence casting thee among such, or through the necessity of thine affairs or relations, thou oughtest to look upon it as a sore and heavy affliction; and wilt find frequent occasion, in the anguish of thy troubled spirit, to cry out, "Woe is me, that my soul dwells among lions, that I sojourn in the tents of wicked and ungodly men! that ever I should reside in those places and among those people, where the name of God is daringly blasphemed, the ways and worship of God impudently derided; where I hear nothing but oaths and curses, and see nothing but wicked examples!" Certainly, if thy heart be true and upright before God, this will be thy perpetual torment; but if thou needlessly makest such converse thy choice, it is not only thy suffering, but thy sin too.

5. *Thy converse with profane and ungodly men will be a very great hindrance to thee in doing thy duty.*

Art thou to perform any duty of religion, in the worship and service of God? Thou wilt find that there is no such check to the freedom of thy spirit, as the presence of wicked persons: who watch all we do; and, with a malignant eye, wait for some advantage to scoff and taunt us for it: so that our holy zeal and ardor will be very much damped, through the sinful awe that is upon us, of offending them. Is it any common affair of thy life, which thou art to transact? If thy interests be much interwoven with theirs, it is hard if they do not importune and prevail with thee, to put in some of their bias; and persuade thee to do somewhat, that either is dishonest or improper. Art thou invested with power and authority, as a magistrate? How hard will it be for thee, to punish the crimes of those, whom thou hast made thy companions and associates! How hard to administer justice impartially, against all the solicitations of thy wicked acquaintance; who will be ready to plead on the behalf of the guilty, only because they are so! Art thou an inferior? How hard will it be to preserve thyself free and untainted from the vices of those, upon whom thou livest and dependest! And so, in every state and condition of life, we shall find that converse with wicked and ungodly men will prove to us, either a mighty temptation wholly to neglect our duty, or a great impediment to a conscientious and right performance of it.

6. *Thou hast other company to keep; and needest not to be beholden to wicked men for their converse.*

(1) There are good men, whose company and acquaintance we should covet and desire.

And, thanks be to God, that, though these are but thinly sown in the world; yet there are but few places, where our lot may be cast, but some one or other may be found, whom we may make our guide and our companion to heaven. And, though they should be but one or two, yet these are enough to take sweet counsel together: these are enough to make thy bosom intimates and familiar friends. The rest, thou mayst lawfully converse with, for thy necessities: those, thou shouldst select, for thy choice and delight.

(2) If all others should be wicked and profane, and thou shouldst live like Lot in Sodom, no righteous person in the place but thyself; yet art thou not left desolate and solitary. Hast thou not a good companion in a good conscience? A companion, which thou always carriest about with thee.

This is such company, as a wicked man dare not keep. Alas! there is nothing but chiding and brawling at home: a quarrelsome conscience, corroding guilt, ghastly reflections, pale fears, terrors, despair, self-accusing and self-condemning thoughts; so that hell would be almost as quiet an abode for him, as his own conscience. And therefore he keeps most abroad; and converses with any thing, rather than with his own heart; and complains of being forsaken and solitary, if he hath not some to divert him from minding the troublesome discourses of his own conscience. Whereas, with a godly man, all is quiet and calm at home: he can take his heart aside, and commune with it; and entertain himself with a silent joy. And, certainly, he who hath such a serene, pure, and pacified conscience, can never complain for want of good company.

(3) Thou mayst, everywhere, and at all times, keep company with the great God of heaven and earth.

And he will make one with thee: and then thou mayst say, as our Saviour did, "I am not alone, but I and my Father." Certainly, that soul hath a strange gadding humor, and is not sociable but wanton, whom the company and communion of God himself cannot satisfy. Such as these would certainly have repined to have been the first in heaven; and would have thought Abel himself not completely happy, who had there none of his own rank to converse with.

III. Suffer me to conclude, with a brief word of APPLICATION.

I shall rather suggest topics for your own meditation, and not enlarge upon them to their full extent.

i. Ought we thus to withdraw from those that walk disorderly? Then LET NOT WICKED MEN CONDEMN CONSCIENTIOUS CHRISTIANS, AS IF THEY WERE PROUD, OR SCORNFUL, OR UNSOCIABLE.

Know, that it is not out of pride or humor; but only out of charity to thee and care of themselves, that they dare not keep thee company. They are far better friends to thee, than those, who help thee to consume away thy precious time, and ruin thy precious soul. They pity thee: they pray for thee: and will be ready to contribute their utmost assistance to thy advantage. Change thou but the ungodliness and dissoluteness of thy life, and thou wilt quickly find them to be the most affable, courteous, and complaisant, companions in the whole world.

ii. Must we withdraw from every one that walketh disorderly? LET THIS, THEN, SERVE TO BREAK ALL KNOTS AND COMBINATIONS OF WICKED MEN.

God, the great master and president of all societies, hath prescribed us the rules of our converse; which, if it be not regulated according to the measures he hath given us, is no longer to be called a society, but a confederacy and conspiracy against heaven. The first and chief thing to be regarded in all company, is, the company itself; which, if it be impious and profligate, we ought as carefully to avoid, as we would a common pest: for the devil hath no such artificial method of insinuating vice into the minds of those, who are of ingenuous and facile natures, than first to lure them into the haunt of wicked and corrupt persons; for custom usually begets liking, and that imitation. Know, therefore, that it is thy indispensable duty to separate from all thy loose and ungodly companions, unless thou intendest to keep them company to hell, and there burn together in unquenchable flames. Think how these wretches, who now hug and embrace one another, will then fly in one another's faces; and with fearful outcries, charge their damnation one upon another: one, for enticing; the other, for consenting: one, for plotting; the other, for executing.

iii. Here SEE THE MISERY OF THOSE, WHO ARE WICKED.

God hath so low and vile esteem for them, that he not only

thinks them unworthy of his presence in heaven, but of the converse and society of saints here on earth.

iv. LET IT BE FOR EXHORTATION, TO THOSE, WHO ARE TRUE CHRISTIANS, THAT THEY WOULD WITHDRAW THEMSELVES FROM ALL THAT WALK DISORDERLY.

The motives and arguments, which might persuade you to this, you have heard already. I shall, therefore, only give you a few helps and directions.

1. *Get your hearts much off from those things, in which wicked and carnal men are permitted to abound.*

For these are the baits, that draw and allure you to their company. There is scarce any person, who loves another, only because he is wicked; but because of some advantage and secular commodity, which he hopes and expects from him. Now when we can overlook all their temporal pre-eminences, their wealth, their honor and interest, and the like, from which we might expect any profit to ourselves, we shall not be in much danger of being inveigled by a person, who hath nothing to recommend him but his vices; nor by those vices, which have nothing to recommend them, besides their own deformity and ugliness.

2. *Be as little beholden and engaged to wicked persons, as possibly you can.*

For the receiving of courtesies from them, will seem to oblige you in gratitude to converse with, yea and sinfully to humor them.

3. *Let them see that you are persons of most undaunted courage and resolution; who will not be afraid of the face of any man alive, but will boldly reprove them as often as they dare to sin in your presence.*

For this will be the means, either effectually to reform them, or at least to make thy company the less acceptable to them; and so to deliver thee from the danger of theirs.

v. Let me add one exhortation more: and that is, that THOSE WHO ARE TRULY PIOUS CHRISTIANS, WOULD SO DEMEAN THEMSELVES, THAT ALL, WHO HAVE ANY INGENUOUSNESS IN THEM, MAY ACKNOWLEDGE THAT THEIR COMPANY IS FAR MORE DESIRABLE, THAN THE COMPANY AND CONVERSE OF WICKED AND PROFLIGATE PERSONS.

1. *Walk so, that men may see there is a reality in your principles, and that your practice is agreeable to your profession.*

For this brings a great credit to religion, and is a beautiful and

charming thing in the eyes of all. That man must needs render himself grave and considerable, who professeth what is true, and practiseth his profession.

2. *Let them find an evenness and constant tenor in your life and conversation.*

Be the same in your houses, as in the church; in private, as in public: for nothing doth so much ingratiate a man in the reverence and esteem of others, as to be steady and consistent with himself in all occurrences.

3. *Especially labor to outstrip wicked men, in those commendable things, wherein they seem most to excel, and by which they gain upon the affections of others to their ruin.*

(1) Some wicked persons pretend to be very exact in doing the works of *justice*, in giving every one their due.

And it is sad to consider, how they trample upon and triumph over the profession of religion, upon this very account; that many, who have pretended highly to it, have been found notoriously guilty of grasping, extortion, and deceit. Now, oh Christians! gain this ground of them: and make it appear, that you are as just towards men, as religious towards God; that neither you, nor your gospel, may be evil spoken of.

(2) They brag much of their *courtesy* and *affability* towards all.

And, indeed, by this very act, they draw many into their society and the snare of the devil. Be you, therefore, kind and obliging; and use all the honest insinuations which you may, to win others, first to a love of your persons, and then of virtue.

(3) They boast much of *love* and *agreement* among themselves.

Which, though it be very false, yea and impossible, that those, who do not agree in God, who is love, should ever cordially agree in loving each other: yet, because they maintain a kind of league and confederacy among themselves, whereby they draw others to join with them; therefore let true Christians, who are all united to Christ Jesus by faith, be likewise united one to another by love. Shall the members of Satan agree, and not much more the members of Christ? Never cast that shame, either upon your Lord and Master, who is the Prince of peace, or upon his holy gospel, which is the gospel of peace: but, by the endearedness of your mutual affection one to another, win over others to the obedience of the truth; who will be much the sooner persuaded to it, when they are once convinced, that only in the society of true Christians they shall find true friends, and such as will most sincerely and cordially love them.

(4) They boast much of their *charity* and *good works*; how liberal they are in relieving the wants and necessities of the poor.

Let them not carry away this glory from you. But, "as we have opportunity, let us do good unto all," and thereby lay up for ourselves treasures in heaven; till we come to our own, that is, our heavenly country, where we shall be repaid with abundant interest and advantage: where we shall converse with God and with Christ, with angels, and the spirits of just men made perfect: where we shall forever be freed both from the contagion and trouble of wicked company: where we shall, with infinite joy and satisfaction, embrace the society of those good men with whom we have here taken sweet counsel together, without fear of disunion or separation, when both they and ourselves shall be made infinitely better.

MISCELLANEOUS SERMONS.

X.

A DISCOURSE ON BROTHERLY ADMONITION.

Thou shalt not hate thy brother in thy heart: thou shalt in any wise rebuke thy neighbor, and not suffer sin upon him. LEV. xix. 17.

WAVING all prefaces and introductions, we may observe in these words three parts.

First. A negative *command*: "Thou shalt not hate thy brother in thy heart:" which implies in it the contrary positive precept, Thou shalt love thy brother.

Secondly. A *direction* how we should preserve ourselves from this rancorous vice of hatred; and express our most cordial love, in the best service we can do for him: "Thou shalt in any wise rebuke thy neighbor.

Thirdly. A forcible *motive*, to excite us unto the performance of this duty, drawn from the consideration of the great benefit, which will, in likelihood, redound to him by the conscientious discharge of it. By this means thou wilt "not suffer sin" to lie "upon him:" implying, that, if this charitable duty of fraternal reproof be neglected, he will still continue in his sins, his guilt will remain upon him, and thou wilt be accessory to it.

I shall not consider any of these particulars by themselves, but treat only of what is here chiefly intended, namely, the necessity of that much neglected duty of brotherly reproof and admonition.

And here I shall prosecute this method, with all possible brevity and perspicuity: and shall show you what brotherly admonition is; the difficulty of it; the necessity of it; then furnish some rules and directions, how it ought to be performed; and some considerations, which may be powerful motives and engagements to it.

I. WHAT BROTHERLY REPROOF OR ADMONITION IS.

It may be defined briefly, to be an act of love and charity, whereby we endeavor to bring our offending brother to repentance,

and to effect his reformation. This brotherly reproof may be administered either by words or by actions. We may remonstrate with them in regard to the greatness of their sin; the scandal which they give to others, either by encouraging or saddening them; the reproach which they bring upon religion; and the danger which they bring upon their own souls.

But, if they are deaf to all these admonitions, and continue obstinate and resolved in their evil courses, we are then to reprove them.

By actions.

That where words have proved ineffectual, we may try how deeds can prevail. Prevail, I say, either to deliver them; or, at least, to deliver thine own soul from death.

And this also must be done these two ways.

(1) If they be our inferiors, over whom we have authority; either as magistrates, or parents, or the like; we ought, when admonition and remonstrance are fruitless, to reprove them by correction and punishment. If they will not hear, they must feel rebuke.

This discipline, if it be seasonably and prudently used, is so far from being an act of cruelty, that it is an act of the greatest kindness and charity that can be, both to them and to others. To them: as it may restrain them from the commission of those future crimes, to which their impunity would else embolden them; and, thus, to fall into the hands of men, may be a means to keep them from falling into the hands of God. To others: as it may terrify them from following the examples of such an one's vices, by seeing the examples of his suffering: thus the punishment of some is made to secure the innocence of others.

(2) If they be our equals, over whom we have no jurisdiction nor coercive power, we are then to rebuke them, if they continue obstinate after Christian admonition, by withdrawing ourselves from all necessary converse with them: not so as to deny them the offices of civility, courtesy, and other charitable assistance to promote their temporal good; but to break off all familiarity and intimacy with them; not to make such immoral and dissolute persons our friends and chosen companions.

Thus the Apostle charges us, 2 Thess. iii. 6: "We command you, brethren, in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, that ye withdraw yourselves from every brother that walketh disorderly, and not after the tradition which ye received of us." And this way of reproving them ought to be so managed by us, that it

may appear that it doth not proceed from any sour, morose, surly humor; from disdain or hatred of their persons: but merely from conscience of our duty towards the glory of God; and to do an act of love and charity, as indeed it is, both towards them, and towards ourselves.

[1] Towards them.

When you thus endeavor to shame them out of their wickedness, by discountenancing them in it. So says the Apostle, 2 Thess. iii. 14: "If any man obey not our word.....note that man, and have no company with him, that he may be ashamed." And, indeed, if a man be not altogether profligate, if he be not utterly lost to modesty, it must needs make him reflect upon himself with shame and blushing, that certainly he is grown a strange, vile wretch, a loathsome and odious monster, when all good and sober men do thus carefully shun and avoid him. Now shame is a good step to amendment; and a blush the first color, that virtue takes.

[2] Towards yourselves.

You are obliged to abandon them, as to reclaim them, so to secure yourselves: for vice is very contagious; and it is unsafe to converse with those, who have such issues upon them, lest you be also infected.

Again. To insure success in this work, even in the ways already stated, *two things are necessarily required as antecedents.*

1. *Instruction and Conviction.*

We ought to bring them to see their fault, before we rebuke them for it; otherwise, while we chide and do not inform them, it will rather seem a proud design of quarrelling with them, than a conscientious design of bettering them. And therefore we find how skillfully Nathan excites in David's mind a feeling of the heinousness and inhumanity of his sin, and works in him a hatred and detestation of that person who was so cruel and devoid of compassion, before he comes to deal pointedly with him, *Thou art the man.* And could we but skillfully convince our brother, by thus representing the odiousness of such and such sins, to which we know he is addicted, possibly we might spare ourselves in that, which is the most ungrateful and displeasing part of this work, I mean personal reflection; and leave it to his own conscience to reprove himself, and to apply it home, with, "*Thou art the man.*"

2. It is necessary that we watch over our brother, *not so as to be*

insidious spies upon him; officiously to pry into his actions, and busily to concern ourselves in all he doth.

This meddling temper is justly hateful: and those, who thus arrogate to themselves to be public censors, and to inspect the lives and manners of others, making it their whole employment to observe what others say or do, that they may have matter either to reprove or reproach them, are a company of intolerable busy-bodies. Yet,

(1) We ought so to watch over our brother as to give him timely caution, if we see him in any danger through temptation or passion; and to admonish him to stand upon his guard, to recollect himself and beware he be not surprised or injured by such an approaching sin. And,

(2) If we have observed any failings in him, we are to watch the best seasons and all the fittest circumstances, in which to remind him of them: that so our reproof may be well accepted, and become effectual.

For he, who will venture rashly to reprove without this circumspection, may do more mischief to his brother by rebuking him, than he had done to himself by offending: exasperating and embittering his heart against piety, for the impertinencies, at least the indiscretions, of those who profess it; and provoking him to sin the more, out of mere opposition and contradiction. And I am verily persuaded, and have in some cases observed it, that very many sins owe themselves to the imprudence of those, who have taken upon themselves to be reprovers; and would never have been committed, if they had not indiscreetly gainsayed it.

II. My second topic is the DIFFICULTY of a conscientious and faithful practice of the duty just described.

How few are there in the world, I will not say skillful enough to do it well, but zealous and conscientious enough to do it at all! Do we not every day see God fearfully dishonored, observe his name blasphemed, his laws violated, his worship denied? Do you not daily see multitudes of wretched creatures, whose crimes not only defy and outrage God, but stab and murder their own souls? And, yet, who is there, that hath such zeal for God or such charity for his brother, as to interpose; and, by a serious and fitting reproof, vindicate the one from dishonor, or rescue the other from perdition? There are many, who will make up a sad mouth, and whisper those things abroad, it may be out of very ill ends and designs: but scarcely one person can be found, who

will dare to maintain the honor of God to the face of those, who boldly affront him; that will dare to open their mouths before those, who will dare to open them against heaven. Certainly, we can easily produce much more reason for our reproofs, than they can for their wickedness; and it were very strange, if we should not be able to beat them off from their confidence, when we have God and our own consciences, nay and theirs also, to side with us. Yet, so it is, that we are generally apt to shrink from a task so troublesome; and to let iniquity pass uncontrolled, yea triumphant. We are well content to let others sin quietly, so that we may live quietly without troubling ourselves with so hard and difficult a service.

And that, which makes it seem so difficult, is a *sinful fear*; and, a *sinful shame*, that seizeth on the spirits of men, and takes off the edge of holy courage and confidence, which are so absolutely necessary to the performance of this duty.

i. Many are AFRAID to reprove sin, lest they should incur displeasure, weaken their secular interest, ruin their dependencies, and bring some mischief upon themselves, by exasperating the offenders against them.

But these are poor, low, carnal considerations. Where matter of duty is in question, it is very necessary for every Christian to be of an undaunted courage and resolution; not to fear the faces of men, nor to be frightened by a grim look or a proud repulse. If he will seriously perform this duty, he must remember, that he is pleading for God, that he is saving a soul from hell! and therefore ought not to value their anger, nor his own damage; but to steel himself against all such mean and sordid considerations. Indeed it shows a most pitiful spirit in us, that we should be more afraid of offending them, than they are of offending God: shall they be bold to sin, and we not bold enough to tell them of it? And yet, such is the cowardice of the generality of Christians, that they dare not appear for God, or for piety and holiness, when they see them wronged by the impudence of boisterous sinners: but those pitiful, little, base carnal respects, of what they may lose or what they may suffer by it, intervene; and make them sit inopish and overawed, like men "in whose mouths are no reproofs:" Ps. xxxviii. 14, whilst these wicked wretches, who have all the reason in the world to be timorous and fearful, glory in thus outbraving and baffling them.

ii. Others, again, are ASHAMED to reprove sin. •

And, whereas many vile and profligate wretches glory in their shame, these, on the contrary, are ashamed of that, which would be their glory. Either they doubt they shall be thought but troublesome and hypocritical intermeddlers: or else, possibly, being conscious to themselves of many failings, they suspect their reproofs will be upbraidingly retorted upon themselves; and so, by reproofing the faults of others, they shall but give an occasion to have their own discovered and exposed: and so they think it the safer way to say nothing. And thus, between these two carnal principles of sinful fear and sinful shame, which are so deeply rooted in our corrupt natures, reproof is commonly neglected; and it is one of the hardest things in the world, to persuade men to be true to God, to their own souls, and to the souls of their brethren, in a faithful discharge of that duty, which is usually attended with such disadvantages and difficulties.

III. Though it be thus difficult, yet, it is a most NECESSARY duty.

The greatest good you can do in the world, is, to pluck up these briars and thorns with which it is overgrown. Consider but how insolent vice and wickedness is apt to be, where none do appear to check and control it; if it can but once silence virtue, it will quickly banish it: if it can but put it to the blush, it will quickly put it to flight. And when it hath once made us either afraid or ashamed to lay a rebuke in its way, what else can we expect, but that it should overspread the face of the whole earth; and, like a general deluge, drown all mankind, first in sin, and then in perdition? There is no other way to prevent this great and sad ruin, but for every Christian vigorously to oppose himself to the growing sins of the times and places in which he lives; and, with courage and resolution, to decry that common profaneness, which gains credit only by our silence. We know that sin is a shameful, opprobrious thing in itself; a thing that disheartens and dispirits the guilty: they wear a conscience about them, which is still checking and upbraiding them; and, if we could but look into their souls, we should see them covered all over with fear, horror, and confusion. They are generally self-condemned persons; and carry those monitors within their own breasts, which are continually reproofing and tormenting them: and, therefore, that they may not hear the voice of their own consciences, they live abroad; and rather converse with any one without doors, than with themselves

and their own troublesome and clamorous hearts. Now let it be our care to stop up all passages, by which they think to make their escape; let them find, that, in whatsoever company they go, they shall meet with those, who will no more spare them, than their own consciences; that company is no sanctuary for sins and guilt; and that they shall be as sure to be reprov'd, as they dare to offend: and when they are thus everywhere beset, their consciences exclaiming against them within, and all whom they converse with without; they will see a necessity for it, either to forsake their vices or the world, and be forced to be virtuous for their own ease and quiet. And, certainly, till Christians do conspire together in this design, we may long enough complain of the abounding of iniquity, without any successful reformation: abound it will, and grow impudent and imperious, unless we join together to beat down its credit; to expose it to scorn and contempt; and to make that, which is so really shameful in itself, to be the greatest mark of infamy, shame, and reproach to any who shall dare to commit it.

But this duty of reprov'g, requires not only a great deal of Christian fortitude and courage; but also a great measure of Christian prudence and discretion. We must not only be resolute and confident in doing it; but we must do it, likewise, in such a fitting way, as may be most likely to work a good effect upon those whom we are to reprove. Therefore,

IV. I shall give you some brief RULES and DIRECTIONS, *when* you ought to reprove, and how you ought to manage your reproofs, so as they may be most beneficial to your brother. And some of them shall be negative, and others shall be positive.

i. For the NEGATIVE RULES, take these that follow.

1. *I ought not to reprove my brother, if I have no certain knowledge of his offense.*

And therefore those, who, upon a blind rumor or groundless suspicion, hastily conclude him guilty, and so fill their mouths with reproofs, show themselves to be very much in love with this office; and are a company of impertinent busy-bodies, who start their arrow before ever they see the mark. We must first be certainly informed, either upon our personal knowledge or upon the undoubted testimonies of credible witnesses, that he is guilty; otherwise, in going about to show him his fault, we shall but show our own folly and credulity: our reproofs will be but slanders; and

our charity, in offering the cure, will not be half so great, as our uncharitableness, in believing the disease.

2. *It is not necessary for me to reprove, where I have reason to conclude that others, of more prudence and interest in the party, either have already or else will more effectually perform it.*

For, otherwise, it will appear, that we do not so much seek his emendation, as to be ostentatious of our own zeal and forwardness: and, besides, too many reprovers may, instead of reforming, rather irritate and provoke. Only, here, beware thou dost not retract this ungrateful office, upon slight pretenses; nor think thyself excused, because others are bound to do it: but consider seriously in thine own conscience, whether thou thinkest they will be faithful enough in performing it, or more dexterous than thou art in managing it; or that their reproof will be more acceptable and more prevalent with thy brother than thine. If not, thou art still obliged to it: and if thou refusest, know, that though he may die in his sins, yet his blood God will require at thy hands.

3. *We ought not to give sharp reproofs for small offenses.*

We must not particularly, and with accent and emphasis, reprove our brother for every involuntary slip, every infirmity and weakness, that betrayeth itself through some sudden passion or temptation: unless it be a sin of custom; or that, which carries with it some signal aggravation, that renders it considerable, as well in the scandal as in the guilt. It will be sufficient to pass by the rest, only with a brief animadversion upon them, enough to put him in mind that he forgot himself on such and such occasions; and so leave the farther reproof to his own conscience, which will better do it for lesser sins, than possibly we can. To reprove small faults with great vehemence, is always as ridiculous, and may sometimes prove as destructive a piece of officiousness, as his, who took up a huge beetle, and struck with all his might, only to kill a fly which he saw sticking upon his friend's forehead. We must not thrust the probe deep, where the wound is but shallow; nor be passionately concerned at our brother's lighter failings: but so govern ourselves, as still to reserve the more sharp and severe reproofs for the more foul and scandalous offenses: for they, who will presently, upon every slender occasion, fly out into exclamations, detestations, and all passionate exaggerations of rhetoric, will but lavishly spend the vigor of their zeal, and leave themselves no art, no methods to express their greater abhorrence for blacker crimes.

4. *We are not to reprove those, whom we have reason to believe are*

such desperate wretches, that our reproofs would but exasperate them to sin the more for a reproof.

To these, such would be no acts of love and charity; but rather a design to destroy their souls, and to heap more and heavy loads of wrath and vengeance upon their heads. Certainly, if we have any sense of God's glory, and tenderness and compassion for our brother's soul, we ought to beware that we do not enrage him the more, to dishonor the one, or to wound the other, by the mistaken charity of our reproofs. And therefore, St. Austin speaks well, *Si propterea corripicndis male agentibus parcat, quia opportunum tempus requirit, vel iisdem ipsis metuit ne deteriores ex hoc efficiantur, videtur esse concilium charitatis*: "It is charity, not to reprove those, who we believe will be the worse for our reproofs." Alas! how many are there in the world, who, when they are reprov'd (and that very justly) for their sins, presently blaspheme, and curse, and rail at piety and all who profess it, violate the good name of their reprovers, and can hardly abstain from offering violence to their persons! Now such as these are past reproof, when once they turn reproof itself into an occasion of further sinning: the greatest exercise of charity to these, is, to let them alone; and not to increase their damnation, by stirring up the virulence and rancor of their spirits. Reproof is spiritual physic for the soul: now, as it is an imprudent course to administer such physic to the body, as will irritate, and not expel the morbid humors; so, likewise, it is very imprudent and unsafe, to administer such reproofs as we know cannot cure the offender, but will only irritate his corruption, and render it the more turbulent, and him much worse than he was before. And, therefore, some are themselves to be reprov'd, who, with an imprudent zeal, reprove others, without ever considering what effects their reproofs are likely to produce; who, as soon as a sin is committed, think themselves oblig'd in conscience, instantly to rebuke them for it, although not only they themselves may be reviled, but the name of God most horribly blasphemed upon this very occasion. "It is" indeed "good, to be zealously affected always in a good thing:" Gal. iv. 18, but remember, that, as zeal and charity ought to be the motive, so Christian prudence ought to be the measure of all our reproofs: and, if you take not the advice of discretion, your zeal for God's glory may but occasion his dishonor; and your charity to the souls of others, occasion their sorer ruin and damnation. Certainly, we are not oblig'd to reprove, where we have reason to suspect we shall rather do hurt than good: it would be but a cruel charity, to poison our brother

in his physic, and to kill him in his cure. And, therefore, both Solomon, and a greater than Solomon, our Saviour Christ himself, have forbidden us to misplace reproofs upon those, who are desperate. Solomon tells us, Prov. ix. 7, 8, "He, that reproveth a scorner, getteth to himself shame, and he, that rebuketh a wicked man, getteth himself a blot:" and, again, "Reprove not a scorner, lest he hate thee." And, says our Saviour, Matt. vii. 6, "Give not that which is holy unto the dogs; neither cast ye your pearls before swine, lest they trample them under their feet, and turn again and rend you:" where it is very plain from the precedent verses, that he dissuades us from lavishing out our reproofs imprudently upon *dogs*, and *swine*, wicked and impure persons, on whom we have reason to think they will have no effect, but only to enrage them, and make them fly out both against God and us with the more violence and madness. To reprove such, is but to cast up water against a high wind, that will be sure to beat it back again into our own faces.

ii. Let us now proceed to lay down some POSITIVE RULES and DIRECTIONS, for the right managing of our reproofs.

1. If thou wouldst reprove with success, *observe right circumstances of time and place.*

And let the one be as opportune, and the other as private, as thou canst. We ought to observe the *mollia tempora fandi*, "The soft and easy hours of speaking." And therefore the wise man tells us, Prov. xv. 23: "A word spoken in due season, how good is it! It is like apples of gold in pictures of silver:" that is, very beautiful and pleasing. There are some happy seasons, wherein the most rugged natures are accessible; and it is a great part of prudence in all our concerns, if we would have them prosperous, to watch such opportunities, and to improve them.

(1) Now, usually, it is no fit season for reproof, presently, as soon as the sin is committed.

For then the heat is not over, nor the uproar of the passions and affections appeased. In all likelihood, a reproof as yet would but irritate. As water, falling upon a red hot iron, doth but cause a great deal of noise and disturbance; so a reproof, just upon the very act of a sin, only excites the sinner still more, and carries him beyond all bounds.

(2) A time of mirth and joy is not fit for reproof.

For that will look like a piece of envy: as if we were malicious

at their prosperity ; and therefore studied to cast in somewhat, that might disturb them : and so they will be apt to interpret it.

(3) A time of exceeding great sadness and sorrow is not a proper season for reproof.

For this will look like hostility and hatred ; as if we designed utterly to overwhelm and dispatch them.

But the fittest opportunity for this duty, is when they are most calm and sedate, their passions hushed, and their reason (with which you are to deal) again reseated upon its throne. When they are free from all inward disturbances of mind, and from all considerable alterations in their outward estate and condition ; then, if ever, they will listen to reproof, and take right measures of the sin for which you reprove them. But, if we reprove them when their passions are in a tumult, and all within in an uproar and combustion, it is no wonder at all if either they reject or revile our reproofs ; for we then accuse them before very corrupt judges, viz., their own passions and corrupt affections ; and you may, with as much reason and as good success, chide the sea for being tempestuous, when the winds rage and are let loose upon it. Chide a man for being angry when he is angry, and what will you get by it, but only some of his foam cast upon you ? Let God himself expostulate with an impatient Jonah, whilst he is in his fit of impatience : " Doest thou well to be angry ?" Jonah iv. 9, and he will tell him snappishly to his face, that he doth " well to be angry, even unto the death." There is no dealing with men while their passions blind their reason : this makes them as utterly incapable of taking good counsel, as if they were brute beasts. Thou wert as good thrust thy hand into a wasps' nest, as come with reproofs and rebukes when the swarm is up : to be sure thou shalt only go away with many a sting and wound ; and thou mayst thank thyself, for no better timing thy reproofs. Indeed, in cases of great importance and absolute necessity, we may run this venture, and possibly succeed well in it ; thus Joab very sharply reprov'd David, when he so immoderately mourned for Absalom : 2 Sam. xix. 5-7, and I think it is one of the roundest checks, that ever a dutiful subject gave to his prince : but if he had not taken that very time, the case had been desperate, and his people had all forsaken him, and therefore the necessity of affairs would not permit him to expect a more seasonable address. Otherwise, generally, it is more advisable to wait a fitting and cool time. As God is said to come down in the cool of the day to reprove Adam ; so, likewise, should we come in

the cool season of a man's passions, when all is quiet and temperate within, for then is there the greatest probability of success.

2. If thou wouldst have thy reproofs successful, *reprove with all gentleness and meekness*, without giving any railing or reviling terms.

He, who mingles reproach with reproof, engages a man's reputation to side with his vices: for whilst we show any bitterness in our reproofs, and give them in villifying and ignominious language the vehicle will hinder the operation of the physic: for they will look like the upbraidings of an enemy; and it is a thing most abhorrent unto nature, to follow the counsels and advice of an enemy. And therefore the Apostle chargeth us, Gal. vi. 1: "Brethren, if a man be overtaken in a fault, ye, which are spiritual, restore such an one in the spirit of meekness; considering thyself, lest thou be also tempted:" which last clause intimates to us, that we ought to deal as tenderly with a fallen brother, as we would desire to be dealt with ourselves, were we in the same condition: for, having the same corrupt nature, and being subject to the like temptations, we may likewise, through God's dereliction of us, fall into the same sins. Now wouldst thou take it well, if any should revile and reprove thee, condemn thee for a corrupt hypocrite, as Job's friends did him; or draw hideous black consequences from every failing and weakness of thine? Certainly, thou wouldst not interpret this to be friendly and candid dealing: no more do thou with others. It is a true saying, that he, who would know his own faults, had need have either a faithful friend, or a bitter enemy: they will both be sure to do it to the full: but then the difference is, that an enemy's reproofs are usually joined with reproaches, and when we are fallen he will stand and insult over us; but a true Christian friend will faithfully represent our condition to us, pity us in it, and endeavor to help and raise us out of it. And such should we be to all: not railing on them for hypocrites, or lost and desperate apostates; for this, certainly, is not the way to reduce them, but rather to confirm and harden them in their sins: we should not gripe nor press their wounds; but rather gently anoint and chafe them: our reproofs should be as oil, smooth and soothing, to penetrate and supple the part affected: and therefore the Apostle again exhorts us, "in meekness to instruct those, that oppose themselves:" 2 Tim. ii. 25. But, whilst we exclaim against them with bitter invectives, and dip all our reproofs in gall and satire, we may quickly make them loathe the medicine, rather than the disease; and sooner break their heads with such rebukes, than their hearts for their offenses.

3. Though our reproofs must be meek and gentle; *yet must they be prompt and energetic also.*

For, as charity requires the one, so doth zeal the other: and the best and most equal temper, is, rightly to mix these two; that, at once, we may show meekness to his person, ("for the wrath of man worketh not the righteousness of God:" James i. 20 :) and sharpness against his sin, for a remiss reprover will make but a slow penitent. We ought so to reprove, that he may not think we only jest and trifle with him: and, for this, it is necessary that we do it with all seriousness, gravity, and authority; not playing about the wound, but searching into the very depth and bottom of it: and therefore we must use such words, as are most significant of our meaning, most expressive of our grief and sorrow for him; and which we think most apt to expose the vice that we reprove, and make it most odious and hateful, keeping still within the bounds of a sober and friendly conviction. Hence the Apostle gives Titus this advice, "Rebuke them sharply; that they may be sound in the faith:" Tit. i. 13: if they want salt and vinegar, spare them not: this, possibly, may cleanse those wounds, which else would fester and mortify. But here is required much spiritual prudence, to know how to suit reproof, according to the different conditions and tempers of the persons with whom you deal: some must be lanced and searched to the very quick, before they can be healed: others require a gentle hand: if they be proud and stubborn, they need caustics; but, for those who are naturally meek and mild, a meek and mild course will be easiest and most effectual. The tempers and cases of particular Christians are so various, that there can be no rules given which may be applicable to every condition: this must, of necessity, be left to your prudence and discretion. Only this rule is infallible: Be sure you flatter none in their vices. Extenuate not their sins: when thou comest to reprove them, do it not in sport: let them see thou art in very good earnest; and tell them their sin, as it is in itself, without mincing the matter or the circumstances of it: for men are always apt to impute somewhat of the reproof to the severity of him that gives it, rather than to the demerits of their own offenses: and, therefore, if thou thyself shalt speak but slightly of their sins, they will be ready to conclude that there were none, or at least so small that it was nothing but officiousness and the love of censuring which made thee take notice of them.

4. Let all thy reproofs be given *as secretly and privately as pos-*

sibly thou canst; otherwise, thou wilt seem not so much to aim at thy brother's reformation, as at his shame and confusion.

For if (as the wise man tells us, Prov. xxvii. 14,) a loud and clamorous benediction given too officiously, is so far from being a blessing, that it is but a curse and a shame to a man's friend: certainly, then, a public clamorous reproof must only tend to the shame and reproach of those who receive it. Indeed, there are some, who offend openly before many: these, if there be no fear of irritating them to do worse, we ought openly to rebuke; and to give them their reproof in the company where they have given the offense: so saith the Apostle, 1 Tim. v. 20: "Them, that sin, rebuke before all;" that is, supposing that their sins be open and public. But, for others, whose sins and failings have been private, and only known to ourselves and a few others, we ought to reprove them in secret; and to be tender not only of their souls, but of their reputation also: so is the counsel of our Saviour, Matt. xviii. 15: "If thy brother shall trespass against thee, go and tell him his fault between thee and him alone."

And, indeed, this is a necessary piece of prudence: not only to preserve his reputation and good name as much as may be, but also,

(1) To preserve the reputation of religion itself, which a more public exposure of his offenses might much impair and discredit. And,

(2) To hinder the spreading of an evil example, which also perhaps some or other would make use of, to encourage themselves in the like transgressions. And,

(3) To preserve him serviceable for the future.

For, by reporting his failings, thou lessenest his credit, and thereby renderest him less capable of doing good than he was before. For, though he may recover himself out of the snare of the devil, and his wound be healed: yet, if his faults have been made public, the scar will still remain; and this will be such a blemish to him, that, having lost much of his repute among men, he will likewise lose much of those advantages which he formerly had of doing good in the world; and thou, by thy imprudent reproofs, be the cause of it. Upon all these accounts, it is necessary that thy reproofs be managed with the greatest secrecy and privacy that may be: for as St. Austin speaks well, if whilst thou alone knowest thy brother to have offended, and yet wilt rebuke him before all, *Non es corrector, sed proditor*: "Thou art not a reprover, but a betrayer."

5. *Reprove not one who is greatly thy superior, unless it be at a respectful distance.*

Toward such, we must not use rude and blunt rebukes; but rather suggest things to them, with address and tact. What says Elihu, Job xxxiv. 18? "Is it fit to say to a king, Thou art wicked? and to princes, Ye are ungodly?" And, indeed, in this case, usually it is most fit and proper that thy reproofs should not carry their own shape and form; but disguise them rather into parables or intreaties, or into any such humble and becoming method; yet, withal, let so much appear, as that they may well enough know thy drift and intent. For it becomes the wisdom and station of inferiors, so to order their speech, that, if it can but be interpreted as a reproof, their superiors may and will certainly know they meant it for such. Thus the Apostle bids us, 1 Tim. v. 1: "Rebuke not an elder, but intreat him as a father:" for, because their place and calling required respect and reverence, therefore the Apostle would not have them bluntly rebuked; but that the reproof should be clad in another dress, that they might appear to be rather intreaties than rebukes. We may observe, likewise, that, when Nathan was sent immediately by God to reprove king David, he doth not attack him directly, and fall rudely upon him for his adultery and murder; but clothes his speech in a parable: and, when he had so represented the heinousness of his sin, so as by that means to make him first reprove and condemn himself, then he tells him, "Thou art the man."

6. *If thou wouldst have thy reproofs effectual, especially beware that thou thyself art not guilty of those sins, which thou reprovest in another.*

It were, indeed, a temper to be wished and prayed for, that we could only respect how righteous the reproof were, and not how righteous the person is who gives it: for there is no more reason to reject sound admonition, because it comes from an unsound heart, than there is to stop our ears against good counsel, because it is delivered perhaps by an offensive breath. Yet, so it is, that, when men of defiled consciences and conversations reprove others, they are apt to justify themselves by recriminating; or, else, to think they do but sport and jest with them; or, thirdly, to hate them for gross hypocrites and dissemblers; or, lastly, to think they do but envy them their sins, and that they would engross all to themselves. It was a true observation of Pliny, in his epistles, that there are some, *Qui sic aliorum vitiis irascuntur, quasi invideant*: "Who are so angry at other men's vices, as if they envied

them;" it cannot be hoped that the reproof of such should ever take effect. But, when a man of a clear and unspotted name shall reprove the sins and vices of others, his rebukes carry authority with them: and, if they cannot reform, yet at least must they needs daunt and silence the offenders, that they shall have nothing to reply, no subterfuges nor evasions; but they must needs be convinced, that their sins are as evil as he represents them, by his own care and caution to avoid them.

V. The only thing that remains, is, to propound to you some MOTIVES, which may quicken you to the conscientious discharge of this much neglected duty.

And I shall but name some few; and leave them to your consideration, to be farther pressed upon you.

And, here, next to the express command of Almighty God, whose authority alone ought to prevail against all the difficulties, which we either find or fancy in the way of obedience thereunto: consider,

i. The GREAT BENEFIT, WHICH MAY REDOUND, BOTH TO THE REPROVER AND REPROVED.

1. To the *reprover*.

(1) Thou shalt hereby provide thyself a friend, who may take the same liberty to reprove thee, when it shall be needful, and for thy great good.

And it may very well be thought, that the Apostle, upon this account, requires us to restore our fallen brother, with meek reproofs, considering ourselves, lest we also be tempted: Gal. vi. 1. that is, that hereby we may purchase a true friend, who will be as faithful to us, as we have been to him. However, certainly it is the best and most generous way of procuring to ourselves true love and respect, from those, whom we have thus reformed. So, says Solomon, Prov. ix. 8: "Rebuke a wise man, and he will love thee:" and, in another place, says he, "He, that rebuketh a man, afterwards shall find more favor than he that flattereth with the tongue:" Prov. xxviii. 23.

(2) Thou wilt hereby entitle thyself to that great and precious promise, Dan. xii. 3: that "They, that be wise, shall shine as the brightness of the firmament: and they, that turn many to righteousness, as the stars for ever and ever:" and to that other, of the wise man, Prov. xxiv. 25: "To them that rebuke" the wicked, "shall be delight; and a good blessing shall come upon them."

(3) Thou shalt increase thy own graces and comforts, more than possibly thou couldst do by separating thyself from them.

Thy graces will be more confirmed, because reproving others will engage thee to a greater watchfulness over thyself. Thy comforts also will be increased, because a conscientious discharge of this duty will be to thee a great evidence of the integrity and sincerity of thy heart.

2. The practice of this duty will be greatly profitable *unto him, that is reprov'd.*

How knowest thou but it may be a means to turn him from his iniquity? And so thou shalt prevent "a multitude of sins," and "save a soul from death:" James v. 20. And hereby, likewise, we shall frustrate one of the great designs and wiles of the devil; which is, to allure men to sin by the examples of those wickednesses, that pass unchecked and uncontrolled in the world.

ii. Consider, THAT WE OURSELVES ALSO WERE DISOBEDIENT AND FOOLISH, SERVING DIVERS LUSTS AND PLEASURES: Tit. iii. 3. but were wrought upon, either by public or private reproof.

And why then should not we use the same charity towards others, which God hath been pleased to make effectual towards us?

iii. Consider, that the text makes it AN APPARENT SIGN OF HATING OUR BROTHER, IF WE FORBEAR JUSTLY TO REPROVE HIM. "Thou shalt not hate thy brother in thy heart: thou shalt in any wise reprove him:" Lev. xix. 17.

So that he, who reproves not his brother, hates him. Now he, that "hateth his brother is a murderer," says St. John: 1 John iii. 15, and "no murderer hath eternal life." Yea, we are guilty of soul-murder, which is so much the more heinous, by how much the soul is more precious than the body.

iv. Consider, that the performance of this duty, were it more universal, WOULD BE THE APTEST AND READIEST MEANS TO PREVENT SCHISM AND DIVISION.

The grand pretense for separation, is the wickedness of many who are church members. Now our Saviour's method is, that such should be first reprov'd and admonish'd, before they be cast out: but it is a most preposterous and headlong course, which thousands in our days take, who cast themselves out of the communion of the Church, for the sins of those, who deserve to be cast out; and, rather than they will perform this ungrateful work of

reproof, choose to separate: whereas, if they would make use of our Saviour Christ's advice, Matt. xviii. 15, 16, to reprove privately, and in case of obstinacy to convict publicly, there would be, as no need, so no pretense left for separation; but either their private reproofs would prevail to reform, or their public complaints and accusations to remove offenders.

v. Consider, that THE NEGLECT OF THIS DUTY BRINGS THE SIN AND GUILT OF OTHERS UPON YOUR OWN SOULS.

See, for this, that Scripture, Eph. v. 11: "Have no fellowship with the unfruitful works of darkness, but rather reprove them." If we reprove them not, we are partakers of their evil deeds, and deserve to be partakers of their torments.

MISCELLANEOUS SERMONS.

XI.

A DISCOURSE ON PERSEVERANCE IN PRAYER.

Pray without ceasing: 1 THESS v. 17.

THIS text is one of those many commands, which the Apostle lays down in this chapter. Being now almost at the end and close of his epistle, and not willing to omit the mention of duties so necessary for their practice, he pours them out in short, but weighty exhortations. The connection between most of them is dark; if there be any. I shall not therefore vex the words, by tacking them either to the precedent or subsequent verses by any forced coherence; but take them as they are in themselves, in one entire proposition: and so they contain in them a duty, and that is, *prayer*; and the manner also of performing of it, and that is, *without ceasing*; and both of these do administer to us this plain doctrine,

I. That IT IS A CHRISTIAN'S DUTY TO PRAY INCES-
SANTLY.

This is a plain and necessary point, and I intend to treat the subject in a plain and familiar method, discussing, *first*, the duty itself, and, *secondly*, the manner of its performance here recommended.

i. I shall begin with the first, WHAT IT IS TO PRAY.

To pray, is, BY THE ASSISTANCE AND HELP OF THE HOLY GHOST, IN THE NAME AND MEDIATION OF JESUS CHRIST, WITH FAITH AND FERVENCY, TO MAKE AN HUMBLE REPRESENTATION OF OUR DESIRES UNTO GOD, FOR THOSE THINGS WHICH ARE ACCORDING TO HIS WILL, WITH SUBMISSION TO HIS PLEASURE, AND WITH REFERENCE TO HIS HONOR.

This is that holy duty of prayer, in which, of all that belong to religion, the soul usually enjoys the most near and sweet communion with God. When we are oppressed with guilt, or overwhelmed with fears and griefs, what sweeter retreat than to betake ourselves to our God and to our Father, into whose bosom we may unload all our burdens? It is the greatest solace of an afflicted mind to lie prostrate before the Lord, and melt itself down in holy tears and in holy affections at his feet. Hence it is said of Hannah, 1 Sam. i. 18, that, after she had poured out her soul before God,

"her countenance was no more sad." And, therefore this is not so much our duty, as our privilege. It is the happiness of the glorious angels in heaven, and of "the spirits of just men made perfect," that they are always near unto God in their attendance upon him; that they are waiters about his throne: and prayer gives to us the very same high privilege, and brings us into the presence and before the throne of the same God: only with this difference; they draw near to a throne of glory, and we draw near to a throne of grace.

Let us now take a more particular view of this excellent duty of prayer, according to the description given of it.

1. *The efficient cause of prayer is the Holy Ghost.*

Then we pray, when we breathe out those requests unto God, which the Holy Ghost hath breathed into us: and therefore, it is said, Rom. viii. 26: "The Spirit helpeth our infirmities: for we know not what we should pray for as we ought; but the Spirit itself maketh intercession for us with groanings which cannot be uttered." All prayer, which is not dictated by the Holy Ghost, is but howling, in God's esteem. And, though wicked men, in their distresses, may be very passionate and very vehement in their requests, yet they have no promise that their prayers shall prevail with God: sometimes, indeed, God doth hear them, and, out of his common bounty and goodness, grant to them those temporal good things which they crave: he, who hears "the young ravens when they cry," he, who hears the lowing of the oxen, sometimes also hears wicked men under their afflictions, when they roar to him as "a wild bull in a net," as the Prophet expresseth it: but yet such prayers of wicked men, though they are answered, are never accepted. God accepts no petitions, but such as are presented to him through the intercession of Christ: now Christ makes intercession for none in heaven, but only for those, in whose hearts the Spirit makes intercession here upon earth: their prayers alone ascend to God as sweet incense; being perfumed with that "much incense," which Christ offers up "with the prayers of all saints." God always hears and answers them, either in the very thing for which they pray, or else in what oftentimes is far better: when they ask that, which will be to their own hurt; then he answers them graciously, by denying them. In James v. 16, the Apostle tells us, that "the effectual fervent prayer of a righteous man availeth much:" this, indeed, may seem a needless tautology, to say an effectual prayer availeth, for it is but one and the same thing to avail and to be effectual; but if we consult the original,

we shall find the words may be translated, "The inwrought prayer;" and, possibly, we may with more congruity render it thus, "The prayer of a righteous man wrought in him;" that is to say, by the Spirit of God: such a prayer availeth much.

2. As the efficient cause of our prayers is the Holy Ghost, so *the only object of our prayers is God*, for it is a representation of our wants and desires unto him.

Now God may be considered either personally or essentially; and, under both respects, we may direct our prayers unto him.

(1) If we consider *the persons of the glorious Trinity*, so they are all adorable with this act of divine worship.

None will deny, but that we may direct our prayers unto God the Father. And that God the Son may be distinctly prayed unto, we have an inspired example in the prayer of St. Stephen; Acts vii. 59: "Lord Jesus, receive my spirit;" yea, and this adoration is due not only to the Divine nature of Christ, which was from all eternity the same in being, majesty, and glory with the Father; but it is also due unto Christ as Mediator, as God-Man, and so his human nature is also joined in the participation of this high honor, through its union to the Divine nature: the very angels in heaven are commanded to adore him as God-Man, as Mediator; Heb. i. 6: "When he bringeth in his first-begotten into the world;" that is, when he brought him into the world as man, "he saith, And let all the angels of God worship him." Indeed we nowhere in Scripture, as I remember, have express mention made of any prayer directed to the Holy Ghost: yet whosoever allows him to be God cannot deny him this worship of prayer: if we must believe in him, we may then certainly call upon him; as the Apostle argues, Rom. x. 14, yea, we have an instance of the Seraphim giving praise unto him, which is one part of prayer, Isa. vi. 3, they cried one to another, "Holy, holy, holy is the Lord God of Hosts:" this God is the same, who, in verses 9-11, bids the prophet say to the people, "Hear ye, indeed, but understand not....Make the heart of this people fat, and make their ears heavy, and shut their eyes; lest they see with their eyes, and hear with their ears:" this is that God, whom the Seraphim adored; and this is that God, who spake to the prophet; and the Apostle, quoting this very passage in Isaiah, tells us, Acts xxviii. 25, that it was the Holy Ghost spake: so that, by comparing these two places together, you see plainly that the Holy Ghost is God; and that he is to be adored by us with the same worship, with which we worship the Father and the Son, for the Holy Ghost is the Lord God of Hosts; which

St. Paul refers to the Holy Ghost, "Well spake the Holy Ghost" concerning them. Thus, if we consider God personally, each Person in the Trinity may well be the object of our prayers.

(2) Consider God *essentially*; and so we are also to direct our prayers to him.

To consider God essentially, is, to have the eye of our faith fixed upon his attributes; not upon his person: to consider him, when we pray to him, not as Father, Son, or Holy Ghost; but only as an infinitely glorious, wise, powerful, gracious God, and the like; to look upon him as a most pure essence, whose presence is everywhere, whose presence and goodness are over all things; to conceive him to be an infinite being altogether inconceivable: this is to consider God essentially. Now this notion of God is equally common to all the three Persons: and therefore this is the most fit and becoming way when we come to God in prayer, to represent before us his attributes: we need not select out any one Person in the Holy Trinity, Father, Son, or Holy Ghost, to direct our prayers unto: unless it be in some cases, wherein their particular offices are more immediately concerned: but, when we pray to him who is almighty, who is all-wise, infinitely holy, infinitely just and merciful, we pray at once to the whole Trinity, both to the Father, Son, and Holy Ghost. So when we pray according to that holy form which Christ hath taught us, "Our Father who art in heaven," Father there denotes not only God the Father, the first Person in the Trinity; but it is a relative attribute belonging equally to all the Persons in the Trinity. God is the Father of all men, by creation and providence; and he is especially the Father of the faithful, by regeneration and adoption: now as these actions of creation, regeneration, and adoption are common to the whole Trinity, so also is the title of Father common to the whole Trinity. God, the first person, is, indeed, eminently called the Father, but that is not in respect of us, but in respect of Christ, his only begotten Son from all eternity: in respect of us, the whole Trinity is Our Father who is in heaven; and, when we pray so, we pray both to God the Father, God the Son, and God the Holy Ghost, to all the three Persons. Yea, and it may seem very probable, that when Christ prayed, Matt. xxvi. 39: "Father, if it be possible, let this cup pass from me: nevertheless," not my will, but thy will be done: I say, it is probable that this prayer was not directed to God the Father personally, but to the whole Trinity; for we must consider that Christ prays here only as he was man, and that appears by distinguishing his will from and submitting it to God's will: now not only God the Fa-

ther, but the whole Trinity was the Father of Christ as man; yea, Christ himself, according to his Divine nature, was the Father of his human nature; and, therefore, praying, as man, to his Father, that that cup might pass from him, he prayed to all the three Persons, both to God the Father, and to God the Son, and to God the Holy Ghost.

3. Observe also the *matter of our prayers*. It must be a representation of our desires to God, for such things as are according to his will.

So we have it, 1 John v. 14: "If we ask any thing according to his will, he heareth us." God's will, in bestowing a desired mercy upon us, is best known by the promises that he hath made to us. Which promises are of two kinds: some refer to temporal blessings, and others refer to grace and glory.

(1) Grace and glory are promised *absolutely*.

It is that, which we are commanded all of us to seek after: and, therefore, here we cannot mistake, while we beg these; for there is no doubt while we pray for grace and glory, but that we do it according to the will of God. Here, we may be earnest and importunate, that God would sanctify and save our souls: and, while we ask this, and make this the matter of our requests, we are under an impossibility of asking amiss; yea, and the more violent we are, and the more resolute to take no denial at the hands of God, the more pleasing is this holy force, since it shows a perfect conformity and concurrence in our wills unto his will, who hath told us, It is his will, "even" our "sanctification:" 1 Thess. iv. 3. This was one part of that violence which our Saviour saith the kingdom of heaven suffered in the days of John the Baptist. It is an invasion that is acceptable unto God, when we storm heaven by prayers and supplications, with strong cries and tears: when we plant against it unutterable sighs and groans, this is such a battery, that those eternal ramparts cannot hold out long against it.

(2) Though we may pray thus, absolutely and with a holy boldness, for grace and glory, saying to God as Jacob to the angel that wrestled with him, I will not let thee go until thou hast blessed me with spiritual blessings, in heavenly things in Jesus Christ: yet, secondly, for the degrees of grace and for the comforts of the Holy Ghost, we must pray *conditionally*: if the Lord will.

For these things are not absolutely necessary, neither are they absolutely promised to us by God. Neither any degree of grace nor any consolation of the Spirit is absolutely promised to us. But, however, our prayers ought to be so much the more fervent

and importunate for these things, than for outward, temporal things; by how much these are of far greater concern, than the other.

(3) To pray for outward and worldly blessings is *not contrary* to the will of God, for he hath promised to bestow them.

But then, as his promise is conditional, if it is consistent with our good: so, truly, must our prayers be conditional, that God would give them to us, if it is consistent with his will and with our good. Whatsoever we thus ask, we do it according to the will of God; and we are sure of speeding in our request, either by obtaining our desires, or by being blessed with a denial. For, alas! we are blind and ignorant creatures, and cannot look into the designs and drift of Providence, and see how God hath laid in order good and evil in his own purpose: oftentimes, we mistake evil for good, because of the present appearance of good that it hath: yea, so short-sighted are we, that we can look no farther than outward and present appearance. But God, who sees through the whole series and connection of his own counsels, knows, many times, that those things, which we account and desire as good, are really evil: and therefore it is our wisdom, to resign all our desires to his disposal, and to say, "Lord, though such temporal enjoyments may seem good and desirable to me at present, yet thou art infinitely wise, and thou knowest what the consequence and issue of them will be: I beg them, if they may stand with thy will; and if thou seest they will be as really good for me, as I suppose them now to be. If they be not so, I beg the favor of a denial." This is the right frame, in which a Christian's heart should be when he comes to beg temporal mercies of God; and, whilst he thus asks any worldly comforts, he cannot ask amiss. It was an excellent saying of the Satirist, "We ask those things of God," says he, "which please our present humors and desires: but God gives those things, which are best and fittest for us: for we are dearer to him," saith the heathen, "than we are to ourselves." "And," says another, very well, "It is mercy in God, not to hear us when we ask things that are evil:" and when he refuseth us in such requests, it is that he might not circumvent us in our own prayers; for, indeed, whilst we act rashly and intemperately whatever we foolishly set our hearts upon, God need take no other course to plague and punish us, than by hearing and answering us.

4. Observe, also, THE MANNER, IN WHICH OUR PRAYERS MUST BE DIRECTED UNTO GOD.

(1) We must pray *in the name of Christ*.

Before the fall, man might boldly go to God, in his own name; and speak to him, upon his own account: but, since the great breach made betwixt heaven and earth, since that great quarrel and enmity arose betwixt God and man, there is no hope of man's finding acceptance with God, upon his own account; and therefore he must go to God, in the name of a Mediator. Hence Christ saith, "If ye ask any thing in my name, I will do it" for you: John xiv. 14. Now to ask in the name of Christ, is nothing else, but, in all our addresses to God, to plead his merits; and to depend upon his mediation, to obtain those good things, which we desire. It was truly said, "God heareth not sinners:" John ix. 31: and how then can we, who are sinners, yea the chief of sinners, hope for audience and acceptance with him, who heareth none such? But, though God heareth not sinners, yet he always heareth his Son, who is continually making intercession for sinners; yea, and he always heareth sinners, who come to him in the name of his Son, and by faith present his merits, through which alone they expect favor and to prevail with God. All things go by favor and friendship, in the Court of Heaven: if we stand upon our own merits and deserts, we shall be shamefully disappointed in our expectations: no merit takes place in heaven, but only the merit of the Lord Jesus Christ; and, while we argue that by faith with God, we come to him in the name of his Son.

(2) Our prayers must be put up *with faith*.

James i. 6: "Let him ask in faith," says the Apostle, "nothing wavering." "For let not that man," that is, let not that man who wavers, "think he shall receive any thing of" God. So, in Heb. xi. 6: "He, that cometh to God, must believe that he is, and that he is a rewarder of them that diligently seek him." Faith is the soul's hand, whereby it receives those blessings, which God willingly bestows. This is the reason, why, though we do so often pray to God, yet we are still so indigent and necessitous: God's ears are not heavy, his arms are not shortened, neither are his bowels dried up: no; still he hath the same power, the same will, and the same love to his children that ever he had: but we want a hand to receive those mercies, which God hath a heart and a hand to give forth unto us: and that is the reason of our urgent need, notwithstanding we do so often come before God in prayer.

(3) Our prayers must be put up as with faith, so also *with fervency*.

And therefore it is required, that we should be "fervent in

spirit, serving the Lord :” Rom. xii. 11, and so the fore-cited place, “The effectual, fervent prayer of a righteous man availeth much.” We should strive to kindle in our souls a holy flame of heavenly affections, when we come to God in prayer. The prayers of the saints were typified, under the old law, by incense ; but no incense was to be offered up, without fire : so, truly, there should be no prayer offered up to God, without the fire and flame of holy affections and fervency. How do you think that a dull and heavy prayer should mount as high as heaven ? How can we expect that God should hearken to or regard what we speak, when we scarce regard what we speak ourselves ?

5. We must observe THE END AT WHICH WE OUGHT TO AIM IN OUR PRAYERS ; and that is, the glory of God. We must pray for those things which we want, with submission to his will and with reference to his glory. That must be the end of our prayers.

Our design, in begging any thing from God, should be, that he may have it out of us again in his service, and to his honor and glory ; and, while we propose this to ourselves, we are like to speed in our requests : we may well hope our prayers will be successful, when we beg mercies, not to consume them but to employ them ; that the increase of all may return again to God, who gave them. And can we think that God will be sparing, when, if I may so speak with reverence, it concerns his own gain to be liberal ? Wicked and unthankful men are but like vapors and exhalations drawn up out of the earth, which do but eclipse the sun that raises them : so, when God raiseth up wicked men by his bounty and goodness, they only serve to eclipse and stain his glory in the world. Whereas, godly men are like rivers, which, as they receive all their streams from the sea, so they return all again into the sea : so these, whatever they receive from God, they improve all for and return all again unto God. And, therefore, they may well hope to speed, who beg mercies at the hand of God, that they may return all again unto the glory of God.

ii. The second thing propounded, was to show you what it is TO PRAY WITHOUT CEASING, *i. e.*, the MANNER OF PERFORMING THIS DUTY.

1. *Negatively.* To pray without ceasing is not always to be actually engaged in this duty of prayer ; either orally, verbally, or mentally ; it is not that all other duties shall be swallowed up and give place unto prayer.

This was an old error of the Messalians and Euchites, who began

340 years after Christ; whose opinion it was, that, because here and elsewhere in Scripture we are commanded to "pray continually," and to "pray always," and the like, therefore the whole work of a Christian was only to pray. A most fond and foolish error! For what is the great end of prayer, but that we may thereby obtain that grace from God, which may enable us to perform other duties of religion and holiness? Certainly, God doth not preclude one duty by another: he who hath commanded us to "pray without ceasing," hath likewise commanded us to hear, read, meditate, and the like. Yea, although prayer be so spiritual and so heavenly a duty, yet we are not to neglect the duties of our particular callings, only that we may have the more time for prayer: God hath divided out the work, and hath given unto every thing its season, in which alone it is beautiful. Prayer makes melody in God's ears, then only when it is well timed: when we crowd out one duty by another, beside the sinful omission of what we should perform, that, which we do perform, becomes unacceptable, because unseasonable. Neither can we hope that that prayer will prevail with God, which appears before him guilty of the death and murder, if I may so phrase it, of other duties. This, therefore, cannot be the meaning of it, that we should do nothing but pray. Hence,

2. *Absolutely or positively*, I shall give you a fourfold interpretation of this expression of the Apostle, pray without ceasing.

(1) That may be said to be done without ceasing, *which is done constantly, and at set times and seasons.*

So we have the word used, Gen. viii. 22: "While the earth remaineth, seed-time and harvest, and cold and heat, and summer and winter, and day and night, shall not cease:" that is, they shall not cease, in their courses and appointed times. So, here, "Pray without ceasing:" that is, observe a constant course of prayer, at fixed and appointed times; still keeping yourselves from any superstitious observations. And, thus, Exod. xxix. 42: the daily sacrifice is called "a continual burnt-offering;" and yet it was offered up only every morning and every evening, and yet God accounts it a continual offering. So here, "Pray" continually, or "without ceasing:" that is, keep up frequent and appointed times for prayer, without intermission.

(2) To pray without ceasing, is to pray with all *importunity and vehemence.*

So, in Acts xii. 5, "the Church" is said to pray for St. Peter "without ceasing:" that is, they were very earnest and importunate, and would give God no rest until he heard them. So, also,

in the parable of the unjust steward, which our Saviour spake on purpose to show how prevalent with God importunity is, Luke xviii. 1, it is said, that the Lord would teach them that they "ought always to pray:" that is, that they ought to pray earnestly and importunately, not giving over till they were heard. So, also, 1 Sam. vii. 7, 8, the children of Israel intreated Samuel not to cease crying to the Lord for them: that is, that he would improve all his interest at the throne of grace to the utmost in their behalfs. So we are bid to "pray without ceasing:" that is, to be earnest and vehement, resolving to take no denial at the hands of God. But yet we must do other duties also, though we are vehement in this. We may learn how to demean ourselves in this case towards God, by beggars who sometimes come to your doors and bring their work along with them: they beg importunately, and yet they work betwixt whiles: so also should we do: we should beg as importunately of God, as if we depended merely upon his charity; and yet, betwixt whiles, we should work as industriously as if we were ourselves to get our livings with our own hands.

(3) To "pray without ceasing," is to *improve all occasions*, at every turn, to be darting up our souls unto God in holy meditations and ejaculations.

And this we may and ought to do, when we hear or read the word, or in whatever duty of religion we are engaged: yea, this we may and ought to do, in our worldly employments. If your hearts and affections be heavenly, your thoughts will force out a passage, through the crowd and tumult of worldly businesses, to heaven. Ejaculations are swift messengers, which require not much time to perform their errands in. For there is a holy mystery in pointing our earthly employments with these heavenly ejaculations, as men point their writings sometimes with stops; ever now and then shooting up a short mental prayer unto heaven: such pauses as these are you will find to be no impediments to your worldly affairs. This is the way for a Christian to be retired and private, in the midst of a multitude; to turn his shop or his field into a closet; to trade for earth, and yet to get heaven also into the bargain. So we read of Nehemiah ii. 4, that, while the king was discoursing to him of the state of Judea, Nehemiah prayed unto God: that is, he sent up secret prayers to God, which, though they escaped the king's notice and observation, yet were so prevalent as to bow and incline his heart.

(4) There is yet something more in this praying "without ceasing." And that is this: we may then be said to "pray without

ceasing," when we *keep our hearts in such a frame*, as that we are *fit at all times* to pour out our souls before God in prayer.

When we keep alive and cherish a praying spirit; and can, upon all opportunities, draw near to God, with full souls and with lively and vigorous affections: this is to "pray without ceasing." And this I take to be the most genuine, natural sense of the words, and the true scope of the Apostle here; to have the habit of prayer, inclining them always freely and sweetly to breathe out their requests unto God, and to take all occasions to prostrate themselves before his throne of grace.

Now those, who would maintain this praying temper, must be especially careful of two things.

[1] That they do not too much engross themselves in the *business* and *pleasures* of this life.

For this will exceedingly damp and deaden the heart to this holy duty. As earth, cast upon the fire, puts it out; so the world, when it is spread over the affections, must needs stifle and extinguish that holy flame, which should ascend to heaven. How hard is it for a man, who oppresseth himself with a load of business, to raise his heart unto God under all that weight! How hard is it for those, who let out their hearts thus to and fro, a thousand ways, to summon them in the next moment to attend upon God, with that awful and serious frame which becomes all those who appear before him! When we come to prayer oppressed with the affairs of this world, we find our hearts subject to manifold distractions and excitements; and our thoughts scattered like bees, still flying from one flower to another, still bringing some intelligence from worldly objects even then when we are about divine employments.

[2] If you would maintain a praying temper of soul, be careful *not to fall into the commission of any known, presumptuous sin.*

The guilt of sin lying upon the conscience, will exceedingly deaden the heart to prayer. Alas! how can we go to God with any freedom of spirit; how can we call him Father, with any boldness and confidence, while we are conscious to ourselves, that we have daringly provoked him by some willful offense? I may appeal to your own experience in this: do not your consciences fly in your faces? Do they not take you by the throat and even choke your speech, while you are praying, with some such suggestions as these? "What! can I pray for the pardon of sin, who frequently commit that, which I know to be sin? Shall I dare to lift up unclean hands before his pure and holy eyes, or to

speak to him in prayer, when those sins, which rankle and fester in my conscience, must needs make my breath offensive to him? Will the Lord hear such prayers? Or, if he doth hear them, will he not account them an abomination?" You now, whose consciences thus accuse you, do you not find such reflections as these to be great deadenings to your hearts, great damps to duty, and clippings of the wings of the Spirit of God and takings-off of the wheels of the soul, so that it drives on but slowly and heavily in the performance of that duty? Certainly, guilt is the greatest impediment to duty in the world: for it takes off from the freeness and filialness of our spirits; and fills us with distrust, diffidence, and a slavish fear of coming before God, rather as our Judge than as our Father. And therefore we find, that, as soon as Adam had sinned against his Maker, he hid himself from him: yea, and we may observe in ourselves, what a slavish dejectedness and deadness seizeth upon us, when we come to God in duty, after we have wronged him by any known sin: how doth this make us come with such misgiving fears, as if we would not have God to take notice that we were in his presence; making us to be continually in pain until the duty be done!

II. The APPLICATION shall be, to stir us up and excite us to the performance of this holy duty; wherein, indeed, the vitals of religion and holiness do consist.

And, to press this upon you, consider with me these following particulars:

i. PRAYER IS ONE OF THE GREATEST SIGNS OF A MAN'S NEW BIRTH.

As, in the natural birth, we know the child is living, by its crying, when it comes into the world; so also, in this spiritual birth, it is an evidence, that we are born living souls to God, when we cry mightily unto God in prayer. And, therefore, in Acts ix. 11, when God sent Ananias unto Paul, that he might take off that fear from him which might otherwise seize upon him in going to such an enraged persecutor as he was, he tells him St. Paul was changed; "for behold, he prayeth." This is an infallible sign that we are children of God, when we can, with a holy reverence and boldness, cry "Abba, Father."

ii. IT IS A GREAT AND INESTIMABLE PRIVILEGE, THAT GOD WILL PERMIT US TO APPROACH SO NEAR TO HIMSELF; that he will permit

such vile dust and ashes as we are to speak to him, who is the "God of the spirits of all flesh."

The holy angels in heaven stand always ministering in the presence of God; and prayer doth, in some kind, associate us with them; it brings us to lie prostrate at the feet of God; at whose feet, also, angels and all the powers in heaven do, with much more humility than we, fall down and worship; we and they fall down together at the feet of the great God; we, in prayer; and they, in praises. This privilege cost Jesus Christ dear, for it is through him, as the Apost^{le} speaks, that we have access with boldness unto the throne of grace: all access thither was barred against sinners, till Christ opened a passage for us by his own death and most precious blood: and shall not we make use of a privilege, purchased for us at so dear a rate as that is? Hath Christ shed his blood to procure us liberty to pray, and shall not we spend our breath in praying? Hath Christ died such a cursed, cruel death, to purchase liberty for us to pray, and shall we rather choose to die an eternal death than make use of it? This is to despise the blood of Jesus Christ; to offer a high affront and indignity unto him; to account it a vile and contemptible thing, when we make no more esteem of that for the purchase of which he shed his precious blood. We look upon it as a great privilege, to have free and frequent access to those, who are much our superiors; and shall we not reckon it a much higher privilege, that we may at all times approach the presence of him, who is "King of kings and Lord of lords," and higher than the highest, as we may do at all times in prayer?

iii. PRAYER IS THE MOST SOVEREIGN MEDICINE AND REMEDY FOR AN AFFLICTED MIND.

Nothing is so desirable in this world as a faithful friend, to whom we may at all times unbosom ourselves, and make all our secrets and grievances known. Now prayer directs us to go to God himself: he is our most faithful friend, who can best counsel and best help us; and prayer is a means whereby we reveal the secrets and troubles of our souls unto him. Prayer is our discoursing with God: when our hearts swell with grief and are ready to break within us, how sweet is it then to take God apart and give our hearts vent! Prayer is making our case known to him, and spreading our wants before him: casting all our burdens upon him, who hath promised to sustain us.

iv. Prayer is a means appointed by God to obtain those blessings and mercies, of which we stand in need.

For all things are God's: he is the great Lord and proprietor both of heaven and earth: whether they be spiritual or temporal mercies that we desire, if it be wealth, strength or wisdom, all are his. If we would have spiritual blessings conferred upon us; our faith, our love, our patience, our humility, strengthened and increased; he is the God of all these graces, and prayer is a means appointed by God to convey all these unto us. Our prayers and God's mercy are like two buckets in a well: while the one ascends, the other descends: so, while our prayers ascend to God in heaven, his mercies and blessings descend upon us.

v. ALL OUR SUPPLIES ARE ONLY FOR OUR PRESENT EXIGENCIES; TO SERVE US ONLY FROM HAND TO MOUTH.

The stock of mercy is not ours, but God's: he still keeps it in his own hands. And this he doth, that he may keep us in a constant dependence upon him, and in a constant expectation of mercy from him. Our wants grow up very thick about us; and, if we did but observe it, we should find every day, yea every hour, new cause to present new requests and supplications unto God: and, therefore, as our necessities never cease, so neither should our prayers.

vi. IF YOU WILL NOT BE PERSUADED TO PRAY, YOU SHALL ONE DAY BE MADE TO WAIL.

You, who will not now look up to heaven in prayer, shall hereafter look up in despair: Isa. viii. 21. "They shall fret themselves," says the prophet, "and curse their king and their God:" that is, in their horrid despair and anguish, they shall curse and blaspheme both God and their king, that is the devil, and they shall "look upward." Though now wicked men will not look to heaven, yet then God will force them to look upwards.

III. TWO OBJECTIONS, possibly, may be made against this duty of prayer.

FIRST OBJECTION. "God doth beforehand know all our wants and desires, and therefore what necessity is there for prayer?"

To this I answer, with St. Augustin, God doth require that we should pray to him, not so much to make known what our will and desire is, for of that he cannot be ignorant: but it is to exer-

cise our desires, and to draw forth our affections towards those things that we beg at his hands, that thereby we may be made fit to receive what he is ready to give.

SECOND OBJECTION. Some say, "It is in vain to pray, because all our prayers cannot alter the course of God's providence. We cannot, by our most fervent prayers, change the method of God's decrees: if he hath resolved from eternity to bestow such a mercy upon us, we shall receive it whether we pray or pray not: if he hath resolved we shall never partake of it, if we do pray, all our prayers will be in vain."

I have long since answered this objection; and told you, that, it is true, God's providence is immutable: but the same providence, that orders the end to be obtained, hath likewise ordered the means by which it must be obtained: as God hath decreed blessings to us, so he hath decreed that they should be obtained by prayer; and therefore we must pray that we may obtain those blessings, for that is the means which God hath decreed for the obtaining of them.

IV. Some possibly may say, "If we must thus pray without ceasing, how shall we be assured that God will hear us? If it be our duty to pray, HOW SHALL WE PRAY so as that our prayers may become acceptable unto God? I answer,

i. If you would have God hear you when you pray, YOU MUST BE SURE TO HEAR HIM WHEN HE SPEAKS.

See that place, Prov. i. 24, 25, 28: "Because I have called, and ye have refused.....and have set at naught all my counsel....." therefore, says God, ye shall call, "but I will not answer: ye shall seek me early, but.....shall not find me:" God stops his ears against their prayers, who stop their ears against his law. So you find it, Prov. xxviii. 9: "*He, that turneth away his ear from hearing the law, even his prayer shall be an abomination.*" And this is but equity with God, to refuse to hear them, who refuse to hear him: wherefore should God give attention to us, when we pray; more than we to him, when he speaks?

ii. If you would have God hear you, YOU MUST BE GREATLY AFFECTED WITH WHAT YOU SPEAK YOURSELVES.

Qui frigide rogat, docet negare: "He, who asks coldly, begs only a denial." Certainly, we cannot in reason expect that God should

regard when we pray, when we do not regard ourselves what we pray. How do you think a lazy prayer, that scarce drops out of your lips, should have strength and vigor enough to reach heaven, and to pierce through the ears of God? If you expect to shoot up a prayer to heaven, you must draw it from a soul full bent.

iii. We must come to God WITH RESOLUTIONS TO WAIT FOR AN ANSWER.

We must not give over prayer, because God doth not presently bestow a mercy upon us that we desire: this is not only to lose the mercy itself, but to lose our prayers also. God is a great God and "King above all gods," and it is but his due state to be waited long upon: in this sense, it is true, "he, that believeth, shall not haste." Certainly, if we believe God to be infinitely wise to know the best season to give us what we crave, both for his advantage and for ours also, we shall not be in haste in our suits, or peevish because we are not immediately answered: but shall patiently wait God's leisure; as knowing that God hath read our petitions, and will grant them when he seeth the fittest time.

iv. If you would pray so as to be heard, BE SURE YOU PUT UP NO REQUESTS IN THE BEHALF OF YOUR INORDINATE DESIRES.

The Apostle gives the reason why, of so many prayers that are put up to God, so few prove successful: James iv. 3: "Ye ask, and receive not; because ye ask amiss, to consume it upon your lusts." Now to ask blessings from God for our lusts, is when we beg any outward mercy, be it wealth, or health, or the like, with reference to the gratifying of our own carnal and corrupt desires. Therefore, in James iv. 4, the Apostle calls them "adulterers" and "adulteresses." Such men are indeed like adulteresses in this: as they ask their husbands those things, many times, which they bestow upon them whom they love better; so wicked men do, many times, ask those mercies and blessings of God, which they intend to spend upon their carnal desires that they love better than God: and therefore it is no wonder that God, who knows their secret thoughts and intents, denies them.

v. YOU MUST PUT SOME STRESS UPON YOUR PRAYERS, if you would have them heard and accepted.

You must believe, that it is to some purpose, that you pray. If

we think it is of no great concern, to pray ; God will think it is of no great concern, to give what we pray for.

vi. YOU MUST TAKE HEED ALSO, THAT YOU DO NOT PUT TOO MUCH STRESS UPON YOUR PRAYERS.

That you do not set them up in the stead of Christ; that you do not expect to merit by your prayers the things which you pray for: but only look upon them as a means and ordinance, which God hath appointed, to obtain those good things that you stand in need of.

vii. You must be sure TO MAKE JESUS CHRIST YOUR FRIEND, WHEN YOU COME UNTO GOD; or else all your prayers are no better than scattered in the air, or lost on the passage.

Benjamin was a type of Christ, in this respect: Joseph chargeth his brethren, that they should not dare to see his face again, unless they brought their brother Benjamin with them. So, truly, they shall find no welcome with God, who do not bring their elder brother Jesus Christ in the arms of their faith, and plead his merit and his righteousness to obtain their desires

i. IT IS AN ACT OF THE GREATEST LOVE, AND MERCY, THAT WE CAN SHOW TO THEIR PERSONS.

We are not to separate from them out of spite or peevishness, but out of good-will and charity; it being the last, and probably the most effectual means to reclaim them: and therefore, as the

against obstinate and contumacious sinners, and to cut them off from its fellowship by the dreadful sentence of excommunication (which power is given her, not for the destruction of any, but for their edification; that they may thereby be brought to a sight of their sins, and repent for them); so also that personal power, which

from the society of such as walk disorderly, should be used by him (with the rules and cautions before prescribed) towards those, who are otherwise incorrigible, as a charitable means to reclaim

thus banished, and, as it were, excommunicate from the company of all those who are sober and serious, they may be moved to reflect upon their actions, and to return both to themselves and to

MISCELLANEOUS SERMONS.

XII.

ON TRUE HAPPINESS.

Blessed are they that do his commandments, that they may have right to the tree of life, and may enter through the gates into the city. REV. xxii. 14.

THESE words, which I have now read, consist of these two parts :

A proposition: "They, that do God's commandments," are "blessed."

Here is the proof of this proposition: they have a "right to the tree of life," and shall "enter through the gates into the city."

It is the connection of both these together, which I intend chiefly to discuss.

I. Give me leave, as a preliminary to the ensuing discourse, to show you what is contained in the first and great word in my text; and that is the word BLESSED.

There is therefore a twofold beatitude or blessedness. The one is perfect and consummate; the other, preparatory and incomplete.

i. The FORMER is the combination of all good, perfective of our natures; and our entire and satisfying enjoyment of it. This blessedness is only attainable in heaven: for God alone is the center of all good; and all the good, which is desirable in this world, is but as so many lines drawn from the center, to the utmost circumference of the creation. There is nothing, that can supply the wants, realize the hopes, fulfill the desires, without confinement circumscribe, without cloying satisfy the most enlarged capacities of a rational soul, but only that God, who is infinitely, universally, and unchangeably good; and therefore he alone is our objective happiness. And our formal happiness is our relation to and union with this all-comprehensive and incomprehensible good; our assimilation to him, and participation, from him, of all those perfections, which our natures are capable of enjoying, but which our under-

standings are not now capable of knowing. But this consummate blessedness is reserved for our unknown reward hereafter; and is not that, of which my text here speaks.

ii. There is, therefore, an IMPERFECT and PREPARATORY BLESSEDNESS, which consists in a meetness for and a tendency unto the other. As those are said to be accursed, whose sins and vices prepare them for eternal perdition; so those, likewise, are said to be blessed, whose grace and holiness prepare them for eternal bliss and happiness.

Now such as these are blessed in a fourfold respect.

1. They are blessed "*in semine*:" "*in the seed*."

They go "forth bearing precious seed," and shall doubtless rejoice in a plentiful harvest. So the Psalmist tells us, Ps. xcvii. 11: "Light is sown for the righteous, and gladness for the upright in heart:" and though they often appear clods of earth, ploughed up, harrowed, and broken with affliction; yet is there that blessed seed cast into them, which will certainly sprout up to immortality and eternal life: as all the beauties of a flower lie undeveloped in a small, unsightly seed. And so, truly, grace is glory in the seed; and glory is but grace full blown.

2. They are blessed *in primitiis*: "*in the first fruits*."

They have already received some part of their eternal felicity, in the graces and consolations of the Holy Ghost; which are therefore called "the first fruits of the Spirit," by the Apostle, Rom. viii. 23, and "the earnest of the Spirit," 2 Cor. i. 22, and "the earnest of our inheritance," Eph. i. 14. Now, as the earnest is always part of the bargain, and the first fruits are always of the same kind with the whole harvest, so is it here: the graces and comforts of the Holy Ghost are the very same now, that they shall be in heaven itself. And therefore the Apostle blesseth God, "who hath blessed us with all spiritual blessings in heavenly places in Christ:" Eph. i. 3. Better, indeed, they shall be in heaven, but not other: here, our graces often languish under the load and pressure of corruption; but, in heaven, they shall be forever vigorous and triumphant: here, our waters of comfort often fail us, our cistern is often dried up or our wheel is broken; but, in heaven, we shall forever lie at the fountain of living waters, and take in divine communications as they immediately flow from the divine essence, without having them deadened or flatted in the conveyance. But, yet, both by these imperfect graces and comforts, we do truly and properly enjoy God: the enjoyments of whom, in any

measure, is happiness; but, in the highest measure, is heaven itself. If, therefore, the mass and lump be blessedness, the first fruits must be blessed also.

3. They are called blessed *in spe*: "*in hope*."

Whence it is called by the Apostle, "that blessed hope:" Titus

13; a blessed hope it is, because that, which we hope for, is eternal blessedness. The hope of worldly things is commonly more tormenting, than the enjoyment of them can be satisfying: it is a hope, which vitiates and disappoints its objects; and so mightily overrates them in the fancy, that, when they come to pass, our hope is rather frustrated than accomplished: and, were it not for that impatience which is the constant attendant of this hope, it would be a problem hard to be resolved, whether expectation or fruition were the more eligible estate: vain, therefore, and wretched must needs be the hopes of those things, which cannot answer what is expected from them; like a golden dream to a beggar, or the dream of a furnished table to one that is hunger-starved. But, the hopes of heaven can never impoverish the glories of it: for they are infinite and inexhaustible; and God hath laid up for his, that, which the heart of man cannot conceive.

A Christian's hope hath two prerogatives above any worldly hope.

(1) One is, that it may attain to a full and final assurance.

As the Apostle speaks to the Hebrews; Heb. vi. 11, where he calls it, "the full assurance of hope unto the end." A hope it is, because the object of it is a future good, desired and expected. But yet it is a hope, that is joined with a full assurance of the event: a hope, that may flower out into such a certainty, as to have no mixture of fear or doubting in its composition; but may be as sure of the heavenly inheritance, as if our reversion were already in actual possession. Whereas worldly hope can never be secure, but some providence or other may interpose to disappoint it.

(2) The other prerogative of a Christian's hope, is, that though it be thus fully assured, yet the accomplishment of it shall always have the sweet relish of surprise and wonder.

For the happiness will be far greater than the hope, and the inheritance larger than the expectation; whereas earthly hopes, if they grow to any degree of confidence of success, upon frustration they turn into impatience and rage. Or if perhaps they do succeed, the sweetness of the accomplishment was long before

sucked out and devoured by our greedy expectation: the game is torn and eaten, before the huntsman can come in.

And, upon both these accounts, the pious and obedient Christian is blessed in hope. It is a blessed hope, that shall certainly be accomplished: and a blessed hope, the accomplishment of which shall infinitely exceed our expectations; and fill us not with shame, but with eternal admiration and wonder.

4. They are blessed *in right and title*.

And, upon this very account, especially, my text pronounceth those blessed that do God's commandments, because they have a "right to the tree of life," and to "enter in through the gates into the city."

II. Now these expressions, according to the genius and style of this whole book, are mystical and metaphorical: and, for the explanation of them, I must show,

What the tree of life is.

What is this city, into which they have a right to enter.

What it is to enter through the gates into the city.

What right it is, which obedience to God's commandments gives us to the tree of life, and to enter into the city.

i. For the first of these, what this TREE of LIFE is.

I answer: We find mention made of this tree of life in two other places of this dark prophecy.

The one is in verse 2, of this chapter: "On either side of the river, was there the tree of life, which bare twelve manner of fruits, and yielded her fruit every month; and the leaves of the tree were for the healing of the nations." But this, very probably, may be only a symbolical representation of the doctrine of the gospel.

Let us then consult the other place, where mention is made of this tree of life: and that is in Rev. ii 7: "To him, that overcometh, will I give to eat of the tree of life, which is in the midst of the paradise of God." Now this carries a plain allusion to that description of the earthly paradise, of which we read, Gen. ii. 9, where it is said, God planted "the tree of life in the midst of the garden." Now this tree of life was so called, not that it had any natural virtue to perpetuate man's life to immortality, but only from its typical and sacramental use; God having appointed the eating thereof as a sign and pledge of our immortality, had we continued in our innocency and obedience. And therefore we

find, that, upon the fall, God set a guard upon this tree; and, as it were, excommunicates sinful Adam from partaking of this sacrament of the covenant of works, which was both a sign and seal of immortality; signifying thereby, that sinners have no right to eternal life, according to the terms of the first covenant. But this right being again restored to us by Jesus Christ, therefore they are pronounced blessed that do God's commandments, because they have a "right to the tree of life:" that is, to that eternal life and immortality, which is brought to life by the gospel, and to which the tree of life in paradise was a sacrament and emblem.

ii. Let us inquire what is this CITY, into which those, who do God's commandments, shall enter.

And we have a most large and glorious description made of it in chap. xxi. of this book, from v. 10, to the end of the chapter. And, in brief, it is nothing else but heaven; the "New Jerusalem," that "holy city, the city of the living God," into which no unclean thing shall enter. "For without are dogs, and sorcerers, and whoremongers.....and idolaters, and whosoever loveth and maketh a lie:" chap. xxii. 15.

iii. What is it TO ENTER THROUGH THE GATES INTO THIS CITY.

I answer: Though, in the foregoing chapter, this city is described to have "twelve gates," and in them "the names of the twelve tribes of....Israel;" to signify to us, that, through the grace of the gospel, there is a passage and an inlet into heaven for all those who are true Israelites; yet, in true propriety of speech, there is but one way and but one gate to heaven. Yea, and our Saviour tells us, that way is narrow, and that gate is strait: for so we find his words: "Strait is the gate, and narrow is the way, which leadeth unto life; and few there be that find it:" Matt. vii. 14. The commandments of God are this gate to the heavenly city; and the two tables of the law are the two leaves of this gate, through which every one must pass, who hopes to be admitted into the New Jerusalem. And, although David seems to make this gate very large, when he tells us, "Thy commandment is exceeding broad;" Ps. cxix. 96, yet that is only to be understood concerning the authority of its injunctions, not of the liberty of its indulgence. It is exceeding broad, in the extent of its preceptive power; for it prescribes rules to all our thoughts, words, and actions, and to every circumstance of each: but it is exceeding

narrow and strait in the scope and allowance that it gives us; so that, as soon may "a camel go through the eye of a needle," as we pass through this gate with the burden of one unmortified lust or of one unrepented sin.

Quest. "But why is it said, that those, "that do God's commandments" may "enter through the gates into the city?" Can any enter in as a thief, or a robber, over the wall? Or can any, as an enemy, scale those eternal ramparts, and take it by invasion?"

I answer: This is so expressed, to denote the free access and admission of those into heaven, who are careful to obey the commandments of God upon earth. Such as these are free-born citizens of heaven: their whole estate, their whole traffic, all their treasure and livelihood are laid up there: they are free denizens, by the charter of the New Covenant: they may challenge ingress as their right and due: and he, "who hath the key of David, he that openeth and no man shutteth, and shutteth and no man openeth," Rev. iii. 7, opens the door to these; and lets them into those eternal mansions, which he hath purchased and prepared for them.

iv. The fourth and last query concerns that RIGHT, WHICH OBEDIENCE TO GOD'S COMMANDS GIVES US UNTO THIS TREE OF LIFE, AND TO THIS HEAVENLY CITY; that is, to eternal life and glory.

Now, here, I shall branch out this query into two: and so I shall show you,

What that obedience is, which gives us a right to heaven.

What that right is, which this obedience doth confirm.

1. What that *obedience is which gives us a right to heaven.*

(1) I answer: it is not a legal obedience, or a perfect personal righteousness, which now gives us this right to heaven.

This is very plain: because, to constitute this, it is necessary that there be both original purity in our nature, which since the fall is miserably vitiated and corrupted; and also a sinless perfection in our lives, in the constant observation of every iota of the law, both as to its extension and intention, that we obey it in every part and tittle of it, and that our obedience unto every part be raised to the highest degree of love, zeal, and charity. This title was once good, but it is now lost, by the fall, in the common ruin and rubbish of mankind; and he, who hath not another title, upon better and easier terms, will find cherubim and the flaming sword

of divine justice set to guard the tree of life from his approaches, as once they did from guilty Adam.

(2) There is, therefore, another obedience which gives a right unto the tree of life: and that is an evangelical obedience; which, according to the grace, condescension, and equity of the gospel, shall be accepted unto and rewarded with everlasting happiness.

Now this evangelical obedience consists, not indeed in innocence and perfection, but in sincere desires, and proportionable endeavors after it; when we strive to the utmost to live holily, and to walk more strictly with God, according to the rules which he hath prescribed us in his holy word.

And it consists of two parts: mortification of our corrupt and sinful affections, whereby we die daily unto sin; and the spiritual renovation and quickening of our graces, whereby we increase daily in spiritual strength, and make farther advances in holiness and true piety.

And, as it consists of these two parts, so hath it also these two adjuncts. The one is, true *repentance* for our past sins; reflecting upon them with shame and hatred; confessing and bewailing them with sorrow and contrition; and endeavoring, with all earnestness and sincerity, to abstain from the commission of the like for the future. The other is, a true and lively *faith*, whereby we rely on the blood and satisfaction of Jesus Christ, for the remission of our sins; and upon his perfect righteousness and prevalent intercession, for the acceptance and reward of our imperfect obedience.

Whosoever doth thus sincerely do the commandments of God, universally and constantly, with his whole strength and mind, as though he expected to be saved by the merits of his own works; and yet, after all, doth so entirely rely on the merits of Jesus Christ for salvation, as though he had never done any thing: he it is, and he alone, who hath this "right unto the tree of life," and shall "enter through the gates into the" heavenly "city:" for he doth his commandments out of a sincere love; and God, who is love, will own his sincerity.

2. I come now to consider what that RIGHT is, *which this evangelical obedience, or doing the commands of the law according to the favor and mercy of the gospel, doth confer upon us, by virtue of which we may assuredly expect eternal life.*

(1) It cannot be a right of *purchase or merit.*

It is a foolish presumption and intolerable arrogance, to think we can deserve any thing at the hands of God, unless it be his wrath by our sins. For,

[1] In all proper merit there must be a correspondence, or at least a proportion of worth, between the work and the reward.

Which to imagine between our obedience and the heavenly glory, is, to exalt the one infinitely too high, and to abase the other infinitely too low. What proportion is there between "a cup of cold water given to a disciple" of Christ; and that ocean of everlasting joy and pleasure, which shall be the reward of it? A man might more reasonably expect to buy stars with counters, or to purchase a kingdom with two mites, than think to purchase the heavenly kingdom by paying down his duties and good works, which are no way profitable unto God, and bear no more proportion to the infinite glory of heaven, than a single cypher doth to the numberless sands of the sea, for "Is it any pleasure to the Almighty, that thou art righteous? or is it any gain to him, that thou makest thy ways perfect?" Job xxii. 3.

[2] The very grace, which enables us to do the commandments of God, is freely bestowed upon us by himself: and therefore the obedience, which we perform unto him, merely by his own assistance, cannot be said, without a grand impropriety, to merit any reward from him.

Such kind of merit is but an idle and frivolous pretense: for, certainly, he, who gives me money to buy an estate of him, doth as freely give me that estate, as if I had never bought it of him, but he had immediately bestowed the land upon me, and not the sum of money.

[3] All our obedience is imperfect; and, therefore, if it deserve any thing, it is only punishment for the defects and failures of it.

This coin is not current: this metal is base and adulterated; the king's stamp defaced and obliterated; the edges clipped; and the superscription, which should be on both sides "Holiness unto the Lord," is on the reverse, at least, "a sacrifice to hypocrisy, formality, and vain-glory:" and therefore this counterfeit and base alloy will not pass for purchase-money; and had it what it deserves, it would be melted down in the furnace of hell.

[4] Suppose it were perfect, which it is not, yet it is no more than our bounden duty; and duty can never be meritorious.

We are bound, by the law of nature, and as we are creatures who have received our beings and the continuance and preservation of them from God, to employ ourselves faithfully and assiduously in his service: and if, for our greater encouragement therein, he hath promised and will bestow upon us a vast and inconceivable reward, we must attribute it wholly to the supererogation of

his free bounty; for, without this, all our services were due to him before. Thus our Saviour tells us, Luke xvii. 9, 10. "Doth" the master "thank" the "servant, because he did the things that were commanded him? I trow not. So likewise ye, when ye shall have done all those things which are commanded you, say" not in a complimentary way, but with truth and sincerity, "We are unprofitable servants: we have done that, which was our duty to do." And therefore, certainly, if we cannot deserve thanks, much less can we deserve so ample a reward as eternal life: and therefore those, who think to purchase heaven and eternal life by doing that, which is not commanded nor their duty, will find a fearful disappointment of their presumptuous hopes, when they shall hear that sad greeting, "Who hath required" these things "at your hands?"

This right then of merit and purchase is excluded; and no man can have a right to heaven, upon the account of the worth and value of his works.

(2) There is, therefore, a threefold right, which they, that do the commandments of God, have to heaven and eternal happiness, viz.: a right of evidence; a right of inheritance; and a right of promise.

[1] Obedience to God's commandments gives us a *right of evidence to eternal life*.

He is judged to have the best right to an estate, who can produce the best evidence for it. Now the best evidence, that can be shown for heaven, is our unfeigned obedience: all other things, which men may rely upon to justify their title, will prove but forged deeds, to which only the spirit of presumption or enthusiasm hath set his seal, and not the Spirit of God; and therefore we find how miserably the confidence of those wretches was disappointed, and their hopes frustrated, who came with "Lord, Lord, have we not prophesied in thy name? and in thy name have cast out devils? and in thy name have done many wonderful works?" Matt. vii. 22. All this may be, and yet be no good title, no good evidence for heaven: for if those, who cast out devils, have not cast out their lusts; if those, who prophesy in his name, by their sins dishonor and blaspheme that name; if those, who are workers of miracles, are yet workers of iniquity; he professeth against them that he knows them not, and commands them to depart from him forever as "workers of iniquity;" Matt. vii. 22, 23: whereas, on the contrary, we find a joyful and blessed sentence pronounced upon others, according to the evidence brought in for

them by their good works. So our Lord himself tells us, Matt. xxv. 34-36. "Come ye blessed of my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you.....for I was an hungered, and ye gave me meat: I was thirsty, and ye gave me drink: a stranger, and ye took me in; naked, and ye clothed me.....sick.....and in prison, and ye came unto me." This particle *for* is not a note of causality or merit, but only of evidence: for, as evidences prove our right to our possessions, so likewise our obedience and good works do effectually prove the right which we have to eternal life, through Christ's purchase and God's free donation; and, therefore, the evidence being clear, the sentence must in equity proceed accordingly. God, as a just and righteous Judge, instates them in the possession of the kingdom of heaven, because they visited, and relieved, and cherished his Son in his members. Not that their love to him, or their charity to them purchased any such right; but only proves and evinces it: it is not the cause of their justification, but a reason why God declares them justified; as the deeds, which I produce, are the reason why an estate is adjudged mine, though the cause of my title to it be either my own purchase or another's gift. As, therefore, those are said to have no right nor title to what they pretend, who can show no evidence for it; so those, who obey not the holy will and commands of God, have no right to the tree of life, because they have no evidence to show, nor no plea to urge for it, but will certainly be cast in their suit.

[2] Those, who do God's commandments, *have a right of heirship and inheritance unto eternal life.*

For they are born of God, and therefore heaven is their patrimony, their paternal estate: for so are the words of the Apostle, 1 John ii. 29: "Every one, that doeth righteousness, is born of God." And, if they are born of God, then, according to the Apostle's argument, Rom. viii. 17: "If children, then heirs; heirs of God, and joint-heirs with Christ," who is the "heir of all things." The trial of thy legitimacy, whether thou art a true and genuine son of God, will lie upon thy obedience to his commands: for, "In this," says the Apostle, 1 John iii. 9, 10, "the children of God are manifest, and the children of the devil: Whosoever is born of God, doth not commit sin.....and whosoever doeth not righteousness, is not of God." Now if, by our obedience and dutifulness, it appears, that we are indeed the children of God, our Father will certainly give us a child's portion; and that is no less than a kingdom. So saith our Saviour, Luke xii. 32: "Fear

not, little flock; for it is your Father's good pleasure to give you the kingdom."

[3] Those, who do God's commandments, *have a right to eternal life by promise and stipulation*: and therefore it is called "eternal life, which God, that cannot lie, hath promised:" Tit. i. 2.

Indeed, the whole tenor of the gospel is nothing else but the exhibition of this promise, and a comment upon it. This is the sum of the gospel, the terms of the covenant, the indenture made between God and man: "If thou wilt enter into life," says our Saviour, "keep the commandments:" Matt. xix. 17. And, in another place, our Lord tells us, "Not every one, that saith unto me, Lord, Lord, shall enter into the kingdom of heaven; but he, that doeth the will of my Father which is in heaven:" Matt. vii. 21.

"But," may some say, "is not this again to establish the antiquated covenant of works, 'Do this, and live?' And doth not this abolish the law of faith, 'He that believeth shall be saved?' Is it not the office of faith alone, to convey unto us a right and title unto eternal life?"

I answer, No; it doth no prejudice unto faith: for we still affirm, that our original and fundamental right to heaven is grounded, not upon our obedience, but Christ's; not upon our works, but upon his; his merits and purchase, which, through faith, are imparted and imputed to us. Yet, give me leave to say, that I think the notion of justifying and saving faith is very much, if not generally mistaken by us: and, as the soul is the most noble and most vital principle of man, and yet is most unknown to him, what it is and how it operates; so faith, which is the vital principle of Christians, and by which the just are said to live, is yet most unknown, both as to its nature and operations, unto the generality of them. Some place it in assurance; some, in affiance to and repose on Christ: some, in one act of faith; and some, in another: which are either the effects of faith as true, or the degrees of it as strong, rather than the proper and adequate nature and essence of it. And then they mightily puzzle themselves, how to accord and reconcile faith and obedience in carrying on the great work of our salvation, which yet were never at a variance about it, but only in their mistaken hypothesis. For what is faith, but an assent to a testimony? The very force and import of the word can carry no other sense: and he, who says he believes, must needs mean that he believes some record or testimony: or else he speaks that, which neither himself, nor any other can understand. Consequently, a divine

faith must be an assent to a divine testimony: that is, to the word of God, contained in the holy Scriptures. But if this faith rest only in a bare and naked assent to the truth of divine revelation, it is but historical and dogmatic; which, though it be a divine faith in respect to the objects believed, yet is but human and natural in respect to its principles and motives. But when this assent to the truths of the Scripture is joined with proportionable affections to those truths, and doth excite us to actions conformable to the discoveries of the divine will, there this faith is justifying and saving. And, certainly, this is not so very distant from obedience, as to be thought hardly reconcileable with it. As, for instance: a man may give a bare assent to this great gospel-truth, that Jesus Christ "came into the world to save sinners," and yet this faith may not save him; because it may be inoperative, and pass no farther than the act of the understanding: this is a dead faith, which can never bring any man to heaven; yea, such a faith as the very devils and damned spirits in hell have, who believe and tremble: James ii. 19. Another man believes the same truth, and assents to the same proposition; but this his assent influences his affections, and governs his actions, in conformity to the nature and consequences of such a belief; and, because he is assured that Jesus Christ came into the world to be the Saviour of it, therefore he loves him, trusts in him, relies upon him, hopes in his promises, and obeys his commands. And this, indeed, is a true, saving, justifying faith: for saving faith is a firm assent unto the truths of God revealed in the holy Scriptures, working in us proportionable affections and actions: he, who so believes the glory of heaven, as to have his endeavors thereby quickened to use his utmost diligence to obtain it; he, who so believes the torments of hell, as thereby to be terrified from doing any thing that might expose him to so great and fearful a condemnation; he, who so believes the attributes of God, as thereby to be excited to fear him for his greatness, to love him for his goodness, to imitate him in his bounty, purity and holiness: he, who so believes the all-sufficiency, merits, and mediatory office of Jesus Christ, as thereby to be engaged with all his soul to love him, to trust in him, to rely upon him alone for salvation, and yield to him all sincere obedience, as the law requires: such an one's faith is saving and justifying. So that, you see, there is no such discord between faith and works, as some would imagine: for that faith, which saves us, must work "by love:" Gal. v. 6; and those works, which capacitate

us for salvation, must be "the obedience of faith:" as it is called, Rom. xvi. 26.

III. Now, what is the END of all this, but to press you to true practical holiness, and a strict obedience to the commandments of God?

If I should go from one person to another, and ask you one by one, "Do you hope to be saved?" where is the man, who would not testify the confidence of his hopes, by his disdain at the question? Yea, but remember that salvation is a law claim: and you have a powerful adversary, who puts in a strong plea against you; even the justice of God and his eternal wrath and vengeance; whose title to us, were it but better weighed and considered, would woefully stagger the hopes of most men, and make their faces gather blackness, and smite their hearts with amazement, and their knees with trembling.

In a matter of such infinite importance, it highly concerns us to examine our right and title, and to peruse and try our evidences; lest, at the day of trial, we be cast in our suit, and pay dreadful damages unto the justice of God.

Only those, who do God's commandments, have this right to the tree of life. Christ hath, indeed, purchased salvation for all; but he is "the author of.....salvation" only to those who "obey him," as the author to the Hebrews speaks, Heb. v. 9; and, without holiness "no man shall see the Lord;" Heb. xii. 14. The inheritance is, indeed, purchased; but where are your evidences of your heirship? Sirs, flatter not yourselves with any vain conceits of the mercy of the gospel, in prejudice to the authority of the law: the commandments are the statute-law of God's kingdom: the gospel is his court of Chancery: but neither justice nor equity will relieve those, who have not done their utmost to observe his statute-law; and therefore those, who indulge themselves in their sloth, and willful neglect both of what they ought to do and might have done, do but deceive their souls with vain hopes: they have no right to the eternal inheritance; but their portion must forever be, with dogs and swine, without the holy city, into which no unclean thing shall ever enter. And if any think this legal preaching, let mine ever be so.

MISCELLANEOUS SERMONS.

XIII.

A FUNERAL SERMON,

PREACHED AT THE FUNERAL OF THE HON. A. GREVILL, ESQ., AUG. 6, 1662.

For the living know that they shall die: ECCL. ix. 5.

LIFE, whether an active spark struck out from the meeting of soul and body together, or whatsoever sprightly and busy thing else it be, is the highest perfection of corporeal beings, because the nearest resemblance to the divine. The variety of its motions, the multiplicity of its functions, the secret conveyance of its influences through those hidden channels of the organs into the several parts of the body, give it a pre-eminence above all that the inanimate greatness or luster of other things can attain.

Upon this very account, philosophy teacheth us, that the least fly, though it be nothing but dust animated by the sun, is yet of greater excellency than the sun itself; and Sampson's bees, than the lion which bred them. These slight and contemptible creatures, which serve for little else than to show the world in how small a room God can enclose the springs and engines of such various motions, have yet a perfection beyond all the large volumes of the heavens, and the light and duration of all the stars in them.

Upon these principles, Solomon, making a comparison, in the verse immediately preceding the text, between lifeless and living things, prefers the meanest of these before the best and noblest of the other: "a living dog is better than a dead lion."

Though this be true of all creatures in general, yet the accommodation of it is here more particularly intended unto man; and the design of the Spirit of God is, to show that life hath a vast prerogative above death. One would think it strange, that there should need so much solemnity, such a strain of preparatives, reasons, and similitudes, to usher in a conclusion so obvious and undoubted as this is, that it is better to live than to die.

And, yet, if we observe it, the method of the Holy Ghost is much stronger, in confirming so plain a thesis by an abstruse argument. The argument we have in the text: "For the living know that they shall die:" because we know that we must die,

therefore it is better to live. This might seem a somewhat harsh kind of reasoning, were it not, that, as to die is the last period; so to die well and breathe out a holy soul into the arms of a merciful God, is the greatest end of life: this advantage have the living. The dead can die no more; for "It is appointed unto men once to die:" Heb. ix. 27: nor, if they err in this, can they ever recall or amend it. This is that warfare, as the wise man calls it, in which we cannot twice mistake: Eccl. viii. 8. But it is the privilege of the living, that, knowing the frailty of their lives and the certainty of their dissolution, they may, by repentance and holiness, so prepare themselves for death as to make it only a happy transition from a temporal to an eternal life, and an inlet into endless bliss and joy. So that if we briefly gather up the sum and force of the reason, we may find that it lies thus: it is better to live than to die, because "the living know that they shall die;" and the knowledge and expectation of our death is the most likely means to engage us to live in such constant holiness and preparation, as that after death we may live in eternal glory and happiness.

The words, though they are thus obscure in their connection, yet, in themselves and their own proper and genuine sense, are very clear and perspicuous. They contain in them the judgment, which the living pass upon their own mortality; and, as they lie before us, cannot be so much as suspected of any difficulty.

I shall, therefore, waiving all other inquiries, make only these two.

Whence it is, that the living attain the sure and infallible knowledge of their own death.

Whence it proceeds, that, though all men generally know that they shall die, yet so few do seriously and in good earnest prepare themselves for it.

I. To the FIRST, I answer:

i. There are MANY THINGS, FROM WHICH WE MAY INFER THE NECESSITY OF DYING. I shall select a few.

1. We may infer it, *by those harbingers and forerunners of death, diseases, pains, and natural decays, which are incident to all men.*

Man is compounded of the contrary and opposing qualities of heat and cold, drought and moisture; which are always waging an intestine war within him. Health is the equal balance of these contrarities; when they are so tempered together, the more active with the more resisting, that neither of them can get the victory over the other. And therefore some suppose, that Adam,

who doubtless was created in the highest perfection of natural health and strength, had all these mixed in so even a temper; that none of them could naturally sway him to corruption; and that God then inflicted the death he threatened, when, upon the first transgression, he turned the evenness of his constitution, and thereby brought him into a mortal state. Sickness is nothing else, but a predominant faction in a man's temper, which, as rebellions used to do, raiseth itself upon the ruin of the whole. As God slackens the reins to some quality in the greater world, when he intends to bring a general calamity and destruction upon it, so likewise in man, who is the lesser world, God doth sometimes let loose the reins, and gives some of his natural qualities an unnatural predominance: and either floods him with dropsies; or burns him with fevers; or benumbs him with palsies, lethargies, or epilepsies; and, by other innumerable diseases, so ravageth his health and vigor, his youth and beauty, that he becomes a ghost, before yet he be a corpse. Yea, those, who have had no such violent assaults as these, yet find their decays grow up together with their years: Solomon hath given us an elegant description of them, Eccl. xii., from the second to the seventh verse: dimness of sight, difficulty of hearing, weakness and trembling of limbs, sluggishness of spirits, chilliness of blood, loss of appetite and desire; and a whole hospital of other incurable diseases are the attendants of old age, which is in itself the most incurable of all; that the very length of living, may be argument enough to prove the necessity of dying. This is that heavy burden, which bows down all on whom it lies; which makes them go stooping to the ground, as if it would bid them contemplate what they are, in the dust, and consider their mortality in that earth into which they must shortly fall. All these are so many harbingers of death, sent before to bid us prepare, for that the king of terrors cannot be long after.

2. *The observation of death's universal empire over all other things, and over all other men*, may give us a certain knowledge that we also must shortly die.

If we consider the vicissitudes of natural things, we shall find that death reigns in all of them. The day vanishes into night, summer into winter: time itself, which destroys all things, yet dies continually, nor can it exist one minute together. Our very life is nothing else but a succession of dying: every day and hour wears away part of it; and, so far as it is already spent, so far are we already dead and buried; so that the longest liver hath no more, but that he is longer in dying than others. This, indeed, is

only to die successively; but that fatal and final stroke is coming, when we shall no more live nor die. All others have felt it, and therefore David calls death "*the way of all the earth.*" 1 Kings ii. 2. We need no other proof of this, than to search into the records of the grave: there lie the rich and poor, the noble and ignoble, the wise and foolish, the holy and profane, the rubbish of a thousand generations heaped one upon another; and this truth, that all must die, is written indelibly even in their dust. The whole world is but a great charnel-house: our very graves were once living: we dig through our forefathers, and must shortly become earth ourselves, to bury our posterity: so thick sown are the carcasses of all the ages since the creation, as were enough to fertilize the whole face of the earth with their flesh, and pave it with their bones. Are not we of the same mould with them? Hath not God's hand kneaded us out of the same clay, and may not his finger crumble us into the same dust? Certainly, the cords of our earthly tabernacle may be as easily unloosed, or cut asunder, as theirs. We read but of two only of all mankind exempted, by a peculiar grace and privilege, from this law of death; and they were Enoch and Elijah: God strangely tacked their temporal and eternal life together; and made their time flow into eternity, without any stop or interruption; like rivers, which glide along into the sea with a free and undisturbed course, while ours must first sink and find a passage under ground.

3. We may certainly know ourselves mortal, *by knowing ourselves sinful creatures.*

(1) It is necessary that death should be *the punishment* of sin; that that primitive threatening might be fulfilled, Gen. ii. 17: "In the day that thou eatest thereof thou shalt surely die."

Hereby the justice of God stands engaged to inflict death upon every transgressor: and to this it is, that the Apostle ascribes it: Rom. v. 12. By sin death "entered into the world," and "death passed upon all men," because "that all have sinned." Death therefore is not so much a debt due to nature, as to the avenging justice of God; and befalls us rather by his ordination and appointment, than by any natural necessity. "It is appointed unto men once to die:" Heb. ix. 27, and this appears, in that man was at first created in pure nature, yet in a deathless state. It is true, that Adam, even before he fell, had in him the union of the same contrary qualities as now we have; and so, at least, had also the remote principles of death and dissolution: but, probably, either these were so harmoniously mixed, as that there was no tendency

to dissolution; or else he was created with such a privilege, that, by eating of the tree of life, or by the command of his own will to which all his inferior faculties were then perfectly subject, he might sway and overrule the jars and discords of an elemental constitution, and continue himself in life, so long as he should continue himself in obedience. So, then, it is not primarily man's nature, but man's sin, and the curse of the law taking hold upon him, that hath brought in this necessity of dying. Yet the justice of God doth not inflict it as a punishment upon all; for death, under the strict notion of a punishment, is proper only to wicked men and unbelievers, who are left to bear the curse of the law in their own persons, and to satisfy offended justice in their own sufferings: as to believers, Christ hath undertaken and borne for them all that was penal: he hath borne the whole curse of the law, "being made a curse for us:" Gal. iii. 13.

(2) So that now, to those, who believe, it is no more a punishment, but only a purgation.

And, were it not that God hath thus altered the quality of it, making it the greatest means of sanctification in the world, thereby turning that which was a curse into a blessing, it might probably be maintained, that faith in the death of Christ would supersede all necessity of dying, and make us not only righteous but immortal. But God hath other ends in the infliction of death, besides the satisfaction of his justice: he makes use of it to purify his people from the relics of their corruption; and it is the only purgatory, which they must ever undergo. Sin hath taken a lease of our souls, and holds them by our own lives: it will be in us to the last gasp; and, as the heart is the last which dies, so is that corruption which lodgeth in it: but, then, die it must: God hath so graciously ordered it, that, though death came into the world by sin, yet sin itself shall be abolished out of it by death. And, as sea-water loseth its brackishness when filtered through the earth, and becomes sweet and wholesome; so a Christian, when he is purified by the grave, loseth all his brackishness, all his dregs and scum, and becomes pure and holy, fit for the enjoyment of a pure and holy God. This is his final victory: this is the deciding stroke between him and all his spiritual enemies: when he hath been long struggling, with too little success, against sin and Satan; and is ready to faint and despond, in the conflict; death comes in, sent as an auxiliary from God, and gives him both the day and the triumph: certainly, he cannot but count it a good office done him, to have his earthly house pulled down upon so many of his

uncircumcised foes, though it crush him too in the fall. Thus hath God brought over death, which was before a formidable enemy, to be of a believer's party: so that, though it had its sting and strength, its very being from sin; yet it proves the most effectual means for the destruction of sin. As worms, when they creep into their holes, leave a slimy dirt about them; so is it with a Christian: when he dies, he leaves his sin, his filth and corruption, all at the grave's mouth: there he leaves them; and his soul, got free from that clog, mounts up into a blessed eternity, where it is forever fixed and perfected in holiness, where there is no object to tempt, nor corruption to betray: no steam of any lust shall there rise to cloud our beatifical vision of God, such as do here too oft darken the eye both of our reason and our faith: we shall no more cast kind glances upon our sins, nor no more know a wavering and hovering desire after them. Oh blessed necessity! when the soul shall be forever tied up to one all-satisfying good! when it shall, with as natural a proneness and vehement ardor, love and delight in God, as it loves itself, and delights in its own happiness! And why then should we desire to linger here below, and to spin out a miserable life, whereof sin and sorrow will still have the greatest share? Here, the best of us are engaged in perpetual quarrels between sin and grace: the one will not yield, and the other cannot: corruption compels one way, and grace commands another. Haste, therefore, oh Christian! out of this struggle: make haste to heaven, and there this controversy shall be forever decided. There, we shall no more live in fear of new sins, nor in sorrow for old; but all sorrow and sighing shall cease: all tears shall be wiped from our eyes, and all sin rooted out of our hearts. And, upon this account, death is necessary.

ii. Now though, by these and other such like considerations, we may arrive at a certain knowledge that we shall die; yet THE PARTICULAR CIRCUMSTANCES OF THE TIME AND MANNER OF OUR DEATH ARE KNOWN TO GOD ONLY.

Some have, a little before their decease, given secret presages of these things, as I am informed this honorable person did. Whence these proceed, it will not be necessary here to inquire. Possibly, they may be only fortuitous and casual: the event may make those things pass for predictions, which were only spoken at random. Or, if they seem too punctual to be such, the best account, which I can give, is this: that death, being about to unloose those secret and sweet bands, those vital knots which tie our

souls and bodies together, we begin to grow more unconfined in our knowledge, as well as our being; and receive intelligence of things after another way, than by the dull conveyance of sense. There is now, that dust and ashes in the eye of the soul, which hinders it from discovering futuritics: but, when death is blowing this away, it begins to know after its own manner; and receives at least some obscure and glimmering hints of those objects, which sense could never administer. And hence, possibly, may proceed those strange prophetic speeches, which many have given out concerning their own death. But, whencesoever they are, God doth ordinarily reserve the exact knowledge of these things to himself.

1. He only knows the critical and punctual *time of our death*; for he hath determined it, to a very moment.

It is God, who turns up our glass; who puts such a measure of sand into it, and no more; and hath prefixed that it shall run such a time, and no longer. It is he, who hath written our names upon so many days and hours as we shall live, as upon so many leaves of his book; and it is impossible for us to turn over that day or hour, which hath not our names written upon it, from all eternity. Now this book of life God hath written in a hand, which is not legible by us; we know not the tale of days that he hath appointed us; but this we know, that we shall fulfill, and cannot exceed them: he hath set us our bounds of living, beyond which we cannot pass: the infant, which dies as soon as it seeth the light, hath filled up its appointed time; as well as he, who lives to decrepit age. And, therefore, though God be said, in Scripture, to cut off some men in the midst of their days; this must not be so understood, as if there were remaining in all the store of time any days that were due to them: but only it denotes, either that God cuts them off in the full strength and vigor of their years, when they might, according to human probability, have lived much longer; or else, comparing the shortness of their life with the length of others, God seems to break it off in the middle before he had finished it. Indeed, most men do themselves shorten their own lives: some by intemperance, are still shaking their glass to make it run the faster; and others break it at once, by violence; yet all live as long as God had decreed, though not so long as was their duty. I shall not farther dispute whether the term of life be fixed or moveable: Job, methinks, hath clearly stated and determined the question, Job vii. 1: "Is there not an appointed time to man upon earth? are not his days also like the days of a hireling?" A

hireling hath his days of prefixed service ; and, when they are expired, he is discharged from his labor : so Job xiv. 5. " His days are determined : the number of his months are with thee : thou hast appointed his bounds that he cannot pass." It is true, however, though God hath thus numbered out our days, yet there are means proper to prolong our lives beyond the term that God hath fixed in his decree, and such as would prove available if applied : whoever dies might have lived longer, had the right means been used : as Martha said to Christ, John xi. 21 : " Lord, if thou hadst been here my brother had not died ;" so we may say, if such means and remedies had been applied, death might have been prevented : but, withal, we must observe, that that God, who hath prefixed to every one his term of life, hath likewise ordained, in his own counsel and purpose, that those means, which are proper to prolong it beyond that term, shall, through some unavoidable mistake or mishap, either not be known or not used. This may be a support unto us, against fears of our own, and grief for the death of others : all our times are in God's hands : he measures out every day to us ; and, as he hath appointed the bounds over which we shall not pass, so he hath appointed that we shall certainly reach them. His providence disposeth of the meanest and smallest concerns of man's life, and therefore much more of life itself : and if a hair of our heads cannot, much less then shall we ourselves fall to the ground without our heavenly Father.

2. As we know not the time, so neither the particular *manner of our death*, whether it shall be sudden, or foreseen ; by disease, or casualty : whether the thread of life shall be snapped in pieces by some unexpected accident, or worn and fretted away by some lingering consumption, or burnt asunder by some fiery fever.

In what manner and shape our death will appear to us, we know not : this is a secret of God's own breast. But, whatever the shape be, if we endeavor by a holy life to prepare ourselves for it, it shall not be frightful nor terrible to us.

But, truly, the generality of the world are as little careful to prepare for their death, as if they were privileged persons, and had a protection given them from that arrest. Though they see thousands fall before them, though death mows down their friends and relations round about them ; yet they live as secure and confident, as if they were not at all concerned in those examples, and as if God's hand cut off others only to make the more room for them in the world. Who is there so foolhardy, that, standing near the mark of an archer, and seeing one arrow fly over his head, another

light at his feet; one glance by his right, another by his left hand; will not at length bethink himself of his danger, that by the very next he also may be shot and slain? Man is this mark, at which death is continually shooting: sometimes the arrow flies over our heads; and slays some great person, our superior: sometimes it lights at our feet; when it kills a child or servant, or those who are our inferiors: sometimes it passeth by our left-hand; and kills an enemy, at whose death possibly we rejoice; and, anon, it strikes the friend of our right hand. Though we see all this, our friends and foes, those of all states and ages, drop down dead round about us; yet are we still as frolic and careless, as if this nothing at all concerned us: whereas, possibly, the very next arrow may strike us through the heart, dead upon the place. It is a strange and brutish sottishness, that so many spectacles of mortality cannot move.

We read of that victorious emperor Charles the Fifth, that to engrave the deeper apprehensions of his death, he caused his own funeral to be solemnized, while he was yet living; he laid himself down in his tomb, and had that rare fate of great persons, to be lamented with true tears; at least his own: *Hoc videlicet rudimento*, as the historian speaks, *Carolus vicinæ jam morti proludebat*. If it were any help to prepare him to die, at last, really, by dying thus first in emblem, we may almost daily have the same. It will be no great mistake, to account every funeral we attend on, to be our own. Let us imagine ourselves nailed up in the coffin, laid in the grave, covered over with earth and turning to worms and dust: this is only but a few days to anticipate what shall be. Not a grave opens its mouth, but it plainly speaks thus much, that we are mortal and perishing; not a decayed bone nor dead skull is scattered about it, but it tells us we must shortly take up our abode with them in the same darkness and corruption. And if, upon every such sad occasion, we make not particular application of it to ourselves, we not only lose our friends' lives, but their very deaths too. Yet, herein are we generally faulty; when God snatcheth them from us, we usually reflect more upon the loss, than the example; and thereby, as he deprives us of the comfort which we had in their lives, so we deprive ourselves of the instruction and benefit which we might have by their deaths.

There are indeed few, unless it be those who have quite divested themselves of humanity, but will sometimes consider their frail and mortal state; at least, when they see a pattern of it before their eyes; when they see departing pangs, distorted eyes, quiver-

ing limbs, the wan and ghastly corpse, the image of death in all its lively terrors; if they have any remainders of natural softness left, it must needs strike them with pensiveness, to think that one day this must be their own case; shortly, all this must be acted over upon themselves. But, no sooner is the dead interred and the grave filled, than all these sage and serious thoughts vanish: and they return again to the same eagerness for pleasures as before.

II. Let us therefore consider, which was the SECOND GENERAL topic propounded, whence it proceeds, that men are so stupidly irrational, that, though they all know they shall die, yet so few seriously prepare themselves for it.

Perhaps, upon inquiry, we shall find the causes of it to lie in these following particulars.

i. MEN ARE GENERALLY SO IMMERSSED IN THE BUSINESS AND PLEASURES OF LIFE, THAT THESE SWALLOW UP ALL SERIOUS THOUGHTS OF DEATH, AND PREPARATIONS FOR IT.

They are employed about other things: like a heap of ants, that are busy toiling to get in their provision, without regarding the foot that is ready to crush them. Such are the impertinent and vain cares of men!

One contrives how he may melt away his days in luxury and pleasure; how he may, by variety and choice of invented delights plume the wings of time, and make the slow days and hours roll away faster over him. It is not likely these should entertain any sober thoughts of dying, who thus, like prodigals, lavish out their time, as if they could never see the bottom of it, and their stock could never be exhausted. The trivial vanities of visits and compliments divide their days; and the only use, which they make of their time, is, to study how they may pass it; till their end comes upon them unthought of, and stern death cuts them off in the midst of all their foolish pleasures.

Some are busily climbing up the steep ascent of honor and dignity; and are so wholly engaged in getting promotions and new titles, that they forget their old style of mortal creatures. They spend their lives in pursuing a puff of wind; an airy fantastic thing, depending merely upon the fond and irrational opinion of the giddy multitude. As cyphers, which as they are placed, stand for scores, or hundreds, or thousands; but are all of the same value, when huddled together: so, truly, the honors, which the ambitious and gallant spirits of the world do so passionately court, are as

fictitious as these ; depending merely upon common esteem. When death comes to gather and crowd the noble and ignoble together in the grave, what becomes of all the distance and difference that was between them ? Will the dust and ashes of the one make obeisance then, or pay respect to the dust and ashes of the other ?

Others are plotting, with the fool, how they may grow rich, and lay up goods for many years ; when yet they know not whether God will not take away their souls this very night ; and then what remains to them of all that, which they have scraped together ? Such men, methinks, may be well compared to hack-horses : they are laden with a rich treasure, and attended with a numerous train of servants ; but, at night, when their load is taken off, what remains to them of all their carriage, but only the stripes and weariness of the day ?

Vain men ! are these the great important things, upon which you set your hearts ? Must the world drink up all your thoughts ; and death, that will shortly snatch you from all the enjoyments of it, be forgotten ? Yet, so brutish are we become, that, though whatsoever we hold here be by the death of the former owners, yet we are apt to look upon ourselves as perpetual possessors ; and never think that we must part with it to others, as others have done to us. The riches and honors, which are but the dust and smoke of this world, have so blinded our eyes, that we cannot discern the near approaches of death : and, thus, while we, Archimedes like, are busily drawing projects and designs in the dust, and are wholly intent about vainer speculations than his, we mind not the alarm, nor perceive the enemy is upon us, till we are stricken dead through the reins.

ii. MEN DELAY SERIOUS PREPARATIONS FOR DEATH, BECAUSE THEY GENERALLY LOOK UPON IT AS AFAR OFF.

Those, who are young, think they must of course live till they be aged ; and the aged think that their decays are not so great and sudden, but that they may well weather out yet a few years more : the healthy think that they need not prepare till they be summoned ; and those, whom God doth summon by diseases and weaknesses, think that yet it is possible they may escape them. And, thus, though it may be God hath told us out but a few days or hours, yet we reckon very bountifully of years and ages ; as if our times were not in his hands, but our own. Men would need no longer eternity, if God should defer his stroke till they thought themselves old enough to die : while their youth and spirits revel,

and their blood runs dancing through their veins, the thoughts of death are not come in season with them : it is as great a solecism to think of their graves, as of going to bed at noon-day : these cold and phlegmatic considerations are more fit for their declining years, and the winter of their lives ; and they resolve that they will then think of dying, when they are choked up with coughs and catarrhs, and can scarce see a death's head but through a pair of spectacles. But what becomes of these resolutions ? When age hath snowed upon them, and frost-bitten all their former pleasures ; yet, even then, they find the dalliances, which pass between their souls and bodies, so sweet, that they are very loth they should be broken off : and this prompts them to think (as we are apt to believe what we desire) that as yet they shall not : they hope they have some time more to live, and so drive their death from year to year before them ; and never think of dying, so long as they have life enough left to think of any thing. This is the veriest dotage imaginable : for if it be true, what the naturalists affirm, that no grown person carrieth to the grave with him the same flesh which he brought into the world, that the revolution of a few years gradually wears away the former body and brings a new one in its stead ; it is strangely gross, that they should think of living much longer, who have already outlived several generations of themselves ; or that they should not at length prepare for death, who have already buried themselves, it may be eight or nine times over ; diseases and natural decays have, for many years, laid close siege to them, routing their guards, battering the walls of their flesh, and forcing the soul to quit the outworks and retire into the heart ; yet the mad desire of living makes them hope they shall hold out these ruins of life yet a while longer, though they see many hundred others, better manned and fortified than themselves, taken in upon the first assault.

We scarce so wretchedly mistake about any thing, as about old age. For,

1. *We reckon it a vast while thither.*

What a show do threescore or fourscore years make, at a distance ! How numerous do the days and hours appear ! But those, who have attained to them, find that they all glide away insensibly from them, and hardly know that they have lived so long, but that they have bought so many almanacs. Certainly, long life is like an evening mist ; and seems far greater to us at a distance, than when we are in it. It is strange how a different stand point will mightily alter the prospect of our years : while

we look forward upon them from youth, they all are represented to us long and happy; but when we look back upon them from age, they then appear to have been short and troublesome: a day to come, shows far longer to us than a year that is gone. It is high time for us, to mend our accounts; and to estimate the years that are to come, by those that are already past. Those thirty or forty years, which were judged by thee in thy childhood an unattainable age, how short do they seem now, when thou hast outlived them! What remains of them all, but that thou art grown bigger than thou wert; and hast the remembrance of some inconsiderable actions, which were done in that time? Why then should we think thirty or forty years yet to come, such a huge gulf as can never be waded through? Remembrance can, with one glance, review what is past; and why should hope and expectation look upon what is to come as boundless and infinite? Are all our winter days spent, and none but our summer in reserve? Are none remaining for us but the fairest and the longest? Surely both hemispheres of our lives have equal horizons; and we shall find, that our past and future years have but just the same measure.

2. *Most men presume that they shall live to extreme age.*

A vain confidence! as if God would turn the world into a hospital, and fill it with the old and decrepit. We have a proverb, that young men may, but old men must die? Whereas observation will inform us, that incomparably fewer die old than young: and those, too, are so worn out with crazy and languishing distempers, so tired with following the funerals of their families, that they detest the age which they formerly desired, and execrate their gray hairs, made such as well by griefs as years. This world is God's nursery for eternity, and he will not cumber it with too many old trunks. Death lies every where in ambush for us. The Jews reckon up nine hundred and three diseases; but the casualties, to which we are subject, are certainly innumerable: a tile may brain us: a pestilential vapor out of the earth may stifle us: our houses may bury us under their ruins: our very meat and drink may choke us; and the means to preserve life may become the instruments of our death. We read of some, whom a fly or a grape-stone has dispatched; or who have died by plucking a hair from their breasts, God turning a very hair into a spear to destroy them. Our souls may leak out at some small crack in those hidden pipes of life, the veins. It is a strange folly, that we, who are subject to such various diseases and accidents, should yet

dream of dying of no other but old age. Did we but seriously consider by what small pins this frame of man is held together, it would appear no less than a miracle to us, that we live one day or hour to an end.

3. *Men think a few of their latest days and thoughts are enough to prepare them for death.*

They account it extreme folly to lose the delights of life, by still jarring upon this ungrateful remembrance, that they must shortly die; and therefore delay it till those unwelcome monitors, age and gray hairs, call loudly upon them; till they can read deep emblems of their graves in their hollow eyes and furrowed brows; and if something must be done for their souls, it shall be only a small courtesy at parting. Thus they devote the flower and spirit of their years to sin and pleasure; and think, when their time runs low, to put off God with the dregs of it, and content him with the devil's refuse. Alas! the only thing worth living for, is, to die well: it is not to eat, or drink, or sleep, or sport, or talk: it is not to grow rich, or honorable; but to learn how we may, by a severe mortification, die first to the world, and then out of it. And is it not (as Seneca speaks), "a shame, that thou shouldst destine to this great business of life, only those relics of thy time, which can be employed about nothing else?" Is it never time to become new men, till you are ceasing to be; or to reform your lives, till you are ending them? Believe it, the vast concerns of your everlasting state require your freshest strength and spirits: it is not a dying sigh, which will waft your souls over into a blessed eternity: it is not to leave somewhat behind for pious uses; nor, at the last gasp, to recommend yourselves into God's hands, when you have been all your life long in the devil's: heaven were a cheap prize could it be so lazily obtained. No; repentance is quite another thing: it is to ransack the soul, to rend the heart, to demolish strongholds, to rout those legions by which we are possessed: in a word, it is to take heaven by a holy force and violence. And what stupendous folly is it, to defer this great work,—a work that will strain every nerve of your souls to perform it well—till the sluggishness and infirmities of old age oppress you! Think you, your souls can then vigorously bestir themselves, when they are grown stiff with age; when your faculties are benumbed, and your spirits congealed past the thaw of a fire? Are they then fit for action, when they lie wrapped about with tough and clammy phlegm, and buried under sloth and sleep? Be persuaded, therefore, instantly to break off all delays,

and from this very moment to provide in good earnest for your souls; lest, as the blandishments of the flesh and the world make you now think it is too soon, so the sudden surprise of death, and the dreadful sight of a boundless eternity rushing in upon you, make you hereafter cry out, "It is too late, too late!"

iii. MEN GENERALLY PUT OFF SERIOUS THOUGHTS OF DYING, BECAUSE OF THE TERRORS AND INSUPPORTABLE DREAD WHICH SUCH APPREHENSIONS BRING WITH THEM.

And therefore death is called by Job, ch. xviii. 14, "the king of terrors;" a king, that comes attended with a thousand phantoms and frightful apparitions. Who can, without a shivering horror, think of the separation of those dear companions, the soul and body, of the debasement and dishonors of the grave; that we must lie in a bed of putrefaction, under a coverlet of crawling worms, there moldering away to dust in oblivion? Shortly we shall be no more ourselves: we must change this substantial life; a life, which is really felt, and hath real comforts in it: we must change it, to live only in the inscription of a tombstone, or the memory of a friend: our eyes must no more behold this dear and pleasant light: we must no more relish the delights of this world: all our fair-laid projects will be disappointed, and we in a moment snatched away from whatever we enjoyed or designed. Now these are too gloomy meditations for the jovial and frolicsome world: such melancholy thoughts of dying prove little less than executioners themselves, and leave death but half its work. Human nature abhors them: we find that Christ himself, in whom it was most pure and spotless, not frightened by any of these weak fears or fancies that pervert our reason; yet even he, as man, recoils at that death, which, as God, he was infallibly to conquer: Luke xxii. 42.

The fullest assurance of heaven is scarce sufficient to disarm the terrors of death, or reconcile us to it. St. Paul, to whom God gave the unexampled sight of heaven, and discovered the ineffable glories, light, and luster of that blessed place, is yet troubled to think that the eternal possession of these can be no otherwise obtained than by dying. Loth he was to enter into heaven through the grave; and, having been once "caught up into paradise," can scarce think of going thither any other way; 2 Cor. xii. 4: "We, that are in this tabernacle," saith he, "do groan, being burdened: not for that we would be unclothed, but clothed upon; that mortality might be swallowed up of life:" 2 Cor. v. 4.

Though his fleshy clothing, like theirs that travel in foul weather, become burdensome with mire and wet, with sin and tears; though he groan under the weighty pressure, and would be glad to be eased and cleansed at any rate: yet nature itself startles, when it sees the rude hand of death stretched out ready to undress him; and, rather than this garment should be taken off, would have it dipped in light and glory upon him.

Thus dreadful is death to us, as men; but, much more, as sinners. It is the guilt which deserves it, and the hell which follows it, that give death its most hideous shape. We are not so much affrighted at the grim and meager looks of this officer, who is to arrest us, as at the ireful countenance of the Judge, who is to pass sentence upon us. It is not the unfelt decay in the grave; or those worms, which must shortly feed upon their bodies: but the burning in hell; and the restless stings of that tormenting worm, which breeds in a defiled conscience. From these death receives its power and anguish. And therefore the Apostle tells us, that "the sting of death is sin:" 1 Cor. xv. 56. And, indeed, well may it be the sting of the first death, since it carries in it the venom and poison of the second. No wonder then, if those, who are conscious to themselves of guilt, dare not think of standing before the dreadful tribunal of God: they cannot bear the thoughts of eternal wrath and vengeance, to be forever inflicted by the almighty power of an incensed God. No wonder at all, that they thrust far from them the thoughts of their dying day, because they presage, that that day, whensoever it comes, must needs be an evil day to them.

III. I shall add no more; but only make some APPLICATION of what hath been spoken.

USE i. If we all certainly know, that we must die, this might teach us so much wisdom, as NOT TO SET OUR AFFECTIONS EAGERLY UPON ANY THING IN THIS PRESENT WORLD; a world, which we must shortly leave.

Death will, within a while, pluck us from it; and it will prove a violent rending to us, if our affections be inordinately glued unto it. Consider, that all things in this present world are but fading and perishing; but your precious souls are ever living and immortal. Be not unequally yoked: do not join an ever living soul to dying comforts. This were a tyranny, worse than that of Mezentius; who bound the living to dead carcasses.

It was a perverse use, which the old heathen made of the

necessity of dying, when, in their feasts, their custom was to bring in a skeleton to their guests; thereby exciting them to mirth and voluptuousness, while they could relish such delights, because shortly they must be as much dust and bones as what they saw. This is the common theme of Horace, Anacreon, and all the Epicurean school. Like those, 1 Cor. xv. 32: "Let us eat and drink, for to-morrow we die."

How much better improvement doth the Apostle make of it, 1 Cor. 29-31: "The time is short: it remaineth," therefore, "that both they, that have wives, be as though they had none; and they, that weep, as though they wept not; and they, that rejoice, as though they rejoiced not; and they, that buy, as though they possessed not; and they, that use this world, as not abusing it: for the fashion of this world passeth away." What folly is it, to toil and wear out our lives in the pursuit of those vain things, from which we may be snatched before we can cast another look at them!

Go, proud beauty, and dote upon thine own and others attractions: but know thou, withal, that shortly the green mold shall cover thy rosy bloom, and worms shall prey upon those features which have drawn away thine own heart and that of the beholders from God.

Go, worldling, rake together thy wealth, and hoard up thy treasures: but know, withal, that, of all thy possessions, thou shalt shortly need no more than will but suffice to bury thee. Gold and silver are too heavy lading to be carried into the other world: nothing of them shall go with thee, unless it be their rust to witness against thee. If there be any difference, whether thou live rich or poor, honorably or despised, in pain or in pleasure; yet, certainly, there is none when thou comest to die. What is it to a dying man, whether his chamber be richly furnished or not? Whether he breathe out his soul in a palace or in a cottage? We shall not take pleasure in summing up our estates, and counting how much worth we shall die, and how many hundreds or thousands we shall leave behind us: these things will be then as far from being our care, as they are now from being our concerns.

Let the voluptuous man pursue his delights and pastimes: but let him know, withal, that he doth but thrust away his days to make way for death. That hour is coming, when he will more earnestly wish to gain time, than ever he studied to spend it.

Let the ambitious court honors and preferments: but, withal, let him know, that it will be no great comfort to him in death, that

he falls under a greater name and title than others. What are they, when they stand upon the highest pinnacle of worldly dignities, but bubbles inflated with the breath of the popular applause? Chess-men, that, on the board, play the king and nobles; but, in the bag, are of the same materials and rank with others?

Though now it be hard to persuade men of these things, yet powerful and eloquent death will certainly persuade them, better than all the sermons and demonstrations that ever they heard. At high-noon, things cast but a short and little shadow; but, in the declining evening, these shadows are extended to a huge length and vast dimensions. So it is with us: in the high-noon of our age, in the heat and vigorous warmth of our blood, the world seems to cast but little shadows; all things in it appear to us bright and splendid: but, when our evening begins to decline and our days to shut in, when our eyes shall swim in night and darkness, then the shadows are extended, and all the bright and glittering things of the world will appear to us nothing but gloominess and horror.

USE ii. Since we all know that we shall die, let this serve TO EXHORT US SERIOUSLY TO PREPARE FOR OUR DEATH.

That our souls are immortal and must live forever, is a dictate of nature itself, if we had not Scripture to confirm it: and those, who have ever ventured to deny it, have rather spoken their wishes than their belief. They are divine sparks kindled only by the breath of God; and the same breath, which kindled them, hath likewise pronounced that they shall never die. Shortly they must launch forth into eternity; and know by experience the truth of those impressions, which God hath stamped upon them concerning their own endless duration.

It will not be many years nor days hence, before every one of us shall be in our eternal state. There stands nothing between us and it, but this thin clay wall of our bodies: a weak fence against so many diseases and casualties, as may every day and hour assault us. What Anacharsis said of those who sailed, that they were but four inches removed from death, is true of us all: we are but four inches removed from death and eternity. Nay, a wound, that pierces not half so deep, may dispatch us. Our souls are in our bodies only as a little air included in a thin bubble; and, when that breaks, oh what or where are we? Gone, in an instant, out

of all the business and pleasures of this present life, into an estate forever unchangeable.

Now what is your care, and about what do you chiefly busy yourselves? Death is approaching you, armed with ten thousand woes and plagues; and is it time for you to trifle away your precious moments, moments on which depends your eternity, in sports, or compliments, or impertinent employments? Is it time for you to muse what garb you will wear; what visit you will make, whether at this house or the next; what recreation shall pass away to-morrow, whether the hawk or the hound; when, all this while, death hath you in full chase? While you are contriving your profits and pleasures, your recreations and employments, and sharing out your lives among them, a sudden, unseen, and unthought of hand of God snatcheth you from them all, and all these vain thoughts perish with you. Is this providing for eternity? Is this improving your short time, and few minutes for heaven? Pity it is, that ever a precious and immortal soul should be entrusted to the care and management of such brutes; who, by minding nothing but their sensual ease and delights, their food and fodder, degrade it in this world, and destroy it in the next.

Now, to provide for eternity, I know no better rule, than to do nothing but what thou mightest be contented to be found doing when Christ shall come to judge thee: to live so, as if every day were thy last, and the very next to eternity. If it be not so, it is more than you or I know. Since we have no assurance of a day or hour longer, it is but reason and wisdom to look upon every one as the last.

Suppose now your chambers darkened, your friends standing round your beds mourning over you, a sad silence filling all the place, nothing heard but your groans, or theirs to answer yours, when your souls, sitting on your lips, shall look over into eternity and flutter to be gone; when they shall, like the flame of an expiring lamp, vibrate and catch at the exhausted body; how would you then spend that small interval of remaining time? Would you be laying up for years? Would you be contriving for your vain pleasures? Or would you send for your idle and dissolute companions, to laugh and jest away that last hour, as well as the rest? No: these designs and this mirth are now dashed: now, the necessities of the soul begin to crowd hard upon you: the sight of a severe Judge and dreadful tribunal, the worryings of an accusing conscience, the fearful review of past sins, and expectation of attending torments, now shake out all such, once

so delightful and contenting thoughts; and, now, when your souls are departing out of your bodies, they begin to come into your remembrance.

Hearken to the voice of dying men. What say they? Oh, that God would pardon and accept them! Oh, that he would spare them a little to repent and reform! Or, else, oh, that he would assure them of his favor, and receive them to his mercy! This is the language, and these are the cares of the sick-bed when death comes nigh to them, and looks them in the face.

And why is it not your care now, in your health and strength? What assurance have you, that you are not now as nigh death, as those, who lie thus languishing, and complaining of their folly for neglecting their souls till this last hour? God doth not always give warning, but some he strikes suddenly: and, for aught we know, we may be as near our deaths, as those, whom their friends and physicians have given over. However, should God spare you longer, yet the duration of your life is most uncertain; and, to delay our preparations for death upon the uncertain continuance of life, is such stupendous madness and folly, that certainly were there not witchcraft and sorcery used upon us by the devil, a man, who hath the free command of his wits and reason, could never be guilty of it. Night is hastening, and spreading its wings over us; the grave expects us, and bids its other corpses make room: death is grasping us in its cold arms, and ready to carry us to the dreadful tribunal; and, yet, how little of our great work is done! We burn away our precious days, and miserably waste our light and our life: we exhaust our strength, and lavish out our affections upon toys and fond nothings: and that life of ours, which the Psalmist calls a "tale," for its shortness, we make a tale for its vanity. We spend it most frivolously, till the days of darkness, which are many, come upon us; and then think to prepare for eternity, when we are fit for nothing else, and least of all for that.

Some sad instances there have been, of those, who, having neglected this great work till the end of their life, have then spent that little remnant of time which they had, in crying out for more. It may be so with you, if your consciences be not awakened sooner, than by the pain and disquiet of your sick-beds: you will then, with horror, cry out, "More time, Lord, more time!" but it will not be granted: the term is fixed: the last hour hath struck: the last sand is run: and, as you and your works are then found, so must you go into eternity.

It seems to me, this is such a consideration, as must needs prevail

with all the world. Our time is but short and momentary: we are but of yesterday, and possibly may not be to-morrow: and God hath suspended eternity upon the improvement of this moment; a few hours will determine our everlasting condition; and, according as they are spent, so must our doom be, either eternal happiness or eternal misery. And why should our precious souls be so vile in our eyes, as to lose them for very sloth and carelessness? Why should we hearken to the suggestions of the flesh, or the allurements of the world? Stand off: we are working for eternity: an eternity, that is but a few days hence; a boundless, a bottomless, and endless state, into which we know not how soon we may enter. This is a motive, which cannot but prove effectual, with all, who have their right understandings about them. But many are so strangely besotted by the devil, that, though they hear these truths, truths which they cannot deny, of which they cannot doubt; yet they live at such a rate of sin and security, as if their eternity were to be expected here, or none to be expected hereafter.

Now if we have carefully prepared ourselves for death, it will be to us a repose, instead of a terror. The Scripture doth frequently compare it to sleep, and it is indeed the most natural resemblance that can be given. While we are asleep, we neither see nor hear: all our senses are locked up: we enjoy none of the delights of life: no comfort in our friends, in our riches or estates: all those things are cancelled out of our memories. And what more than this can death do to a believer? And, therefore, they are said to "*sleep in Jesus*:" 1 Thess. iv. 14. It is a sleep, which gives them rest from their labors: a sleep, which opens their eyes, before benighted with ignorance and error: a sleep, which deprives them of the dim and cloudy light of this world; but brings them to the vision of that radiant source and fountain of all lights, in whose beams angels do forever rejoice and by which they are forever cherished.

Why should we then be so terrified at the apprehensions of death? We may truly say, the bitterness of it is past: its sting is taken out. We may safely take this serpent into our bosoms: though it hiss against us, it cannot wound us: yea, instead of wounding us, it is reconciled to us, and becomes one of our party. And, therefore, when the Apostle is drawing up a Christian's inventory, he reckons death as part of his goods; "*whether...life or death, or things present or things to come, all are yours*:" 1 Cor. iii. 22: and, so, Phil. i. 21: "*To me to live is Christ, and*

to die is gain." And well may a Christian count death among his gains, since it is the hand of death, which draws aside the curtain of the great tabernacle, and lets us in to see God face to face in that palace of inestimable majesty, where we shall have the strong rays of his glory beat full upon us, and be ourselves made strong enough to bear them. Yea, these bodies of ours, which are the only part that can suffer damage, shall have it abundantly recompensed at the resurrection: they are "sown in weakness," but shall be "raised in power:" they are "sown in dishonor," but "raised in glory:" 1 Cor. xv. 43: these frail and dull clods shall then become impassible as angels, subtle as a ray of light, bright as the sun, and nimble as the wings of lightning.

IV. Having thus exhorted you to prepare for death, I know not how farther to enforce it upon you with greater advantage, than by propounding to you **THE EXAMPLE OF THIS NOBLE PERSON DECEASED**, whose whole life was a more serious preparation for death, than most men's dying thoughts.

He well knew that the nobility of his extraction would be no excuse to him from the peremptory summons of death. Neither did he make it any excuse to him from an industrious and strict preparation for it. This he testified by the series of his whole life; in which there evidently appeared such an awe of God, and a real sense of true piety and religion, as clearly evinced that he had strong and habitual meditations of that great leveling day, wherein the highest shall stand upon no higher ground than the meanest.

He did not think religion any stain to his honor, nor minding heaven to be the employment of those only who have nothing on earth.

Indeed, irreligion and atheism are now reckoned as a piece of good breeding, among the great ones of the world: it is now counted as a sign of an abject and low-sunk spirit, to acknowledge even God himself for their superior. Those are cried up as the wits of the time, who can daringly dispute against whatsoever is sacred in Christianity; yea, against the being of God himself. It is now become an evidence of a judicious and gallant mind, to call into question the most fundamental maxims of our faith; and the authority too of those holy Oracles, which confirm them. Reason alone is extolled as the best and most sufficient guide, both in matters of belief and practice; and they appeal to that for their judge, which commonly, by their excesses, they either so corrupt

that it will not discern the truth, or else so stupidly that it cannot. And, thus, as the moon shines brightest when it is at the greatest opposition to the sun, these think their reason then shines brightest, when it stands at the greatest opposition to God.

This noble person, whose reason had as fleet a wing and could soar as high a pitch as any of theirs who pretend to nothing above it, yet saw it reasonable to give his faith the precedence; and always found more acquiescence in a "Thus saith the Lord," than in the most critical researches, and positive conclusions of his reason. So reverend an esteem had he for those sacred dictates of Scripture, that, though his wit and parts shone forth to admiration in whatsoever he pleased to employ them, yet he never presumed to exercise them on that common-place of abusing divine verities: he was not ambitious to commence a wit, by blasphemy; nor did he pretend to ingenuousness, by being impious. But, whereas too many use their wit in jesting at them, he showed his holy wisdom in believing and obeying. Other books he made the ornament of his mind: this, the guide of his life. He knew what others said, but did what God spake.

He was not made a Christian out of the old heathen; nor owed his virtues to the sage precepts of Plutarch or Epictetus. These are now become the penmen and Evangelists of our young gentry. Seneca is with them preferred before St. Paul, though his chief credit be that he wrote so well that some have mistakingly thought him Paul's disciple. The virtue of this noble person acknowledged a more divine original; being formed in him by the same Spirit, that gave him rules to act. This taught him to outstrip, in true wisdom, temperance, and fortitude, not only whatsoever those starched moralists did, but whatsoever they wrote; and, whereas, they prescribed but the exercise of *virtue*, he sublimed it, and made it *grace*.

Next to his absolute subjection to God, was his obedience unto his honorable, and now disconsolate mother: wherein he was to such a degree punctual, that, as her wisdom commanded nothing but what was fit, so his duty disputed not the fitness of things beyond her command. His demeanor toward her was most submissive: and toward all so obliging, that it was but the same thing to know and admire him.

His converse gave the world a singular pattern of harmless and inoffensive mirth; of a gentility, not made up of fine clothes and hypocritical courtliness; a sweetness and familiarity, that, at once, gained love and preserved respect; a grandeur and nobility, safe

in its own worth, nor needing to maintain itself by a jealous and morose distance.

Never did vice, in youth, find a more confirmed goodness. So impregnable was he against the temptations, which gain an easy access to those of his rank and quality, that they could neither insinuate into him by their allurements, nor force him by their importunities.

Nor did he think it enough to secure his mind from the infection of vice, unless also he secured his fame from the suspicion of it. Some, indeed, owe their innocence to their dullness and stupidity; and are only not vicious, because not witty enough to be takingly and handsomely wicked. His virtue was of choice: and the severest exercise of it mingled with such charms from his parts and ingenuousness, that his very seriousness was more alluring, than those light diversions in others which entice only because they please.

His apprehension was quick and piercing, his memory faithful and retentive, his fancy sprightly and active; and his judgment overruling them all, neither prejudiced by vulgar opinions, nor easily cozened by varnished and plausible error.

After all this, there can be nothing wanting to make up a most complete and absolute person, but only industry to quicken his parts, and time to ripen both to perfection.

His industry was remarkable, in the assiduousness of his studies; where he spent not his hours in plays or romances, those follies of good wits; but in the disquisition of solid and masculine knowledge: in which he outstripped even those, who were to depend upon learning for their livelihood; and had no other revenue, than what arose out of their fruitful and well-cultivated brains.

And, as for that other, I mean time, to mature these growing hopes, that sad providence which hath called us together to this mournful solemnity, hath denied it: by a sudden and surprising stroke cutting off his days, and thereby rendering that virtue, those parts, that industry, useless to us in any thing but the example: and I should say unprofitable to him too, but only that, which he never had opportunity to employ in this world, hath I doubt not, fitted him for a better.

MISCELLANEOUS SERMONS.

XIV.

A DISCOURSE ON MAN'S MORTALITY.

It is appointed unto men once to die; but after this the judgment.

HEB. ix. 27.

A SERMON on death hath then a double advantage to make deep impressions upon us, when it is attended with a spectacle of mortality.

Were there but the sad pomp of a funeral now presented before you, a dead corpse brought to be interred, a grave digged through into the earth, dry and decaying bones lying scattered about the mouth of it in fearful confusion, a solemn train of mourners tolled along the streets by the doleful moan of a bell; did you see the dead laid down in the dust, the place of darkness and silence, their friends groaning out their last farewell, clods of earth falling in upon them, and falling with dull and heavy sounds upon their coffins; had your affections but such a preparation as this is, possibly this might more easily work and move upon them; for it must needs make men serious and pensive to think, that this is but the pattern of what must befall themselves; and that all this must shortly be acted upon them, which they now see done unto others.

But, since this day presents us with no such solemnity, some perhaps may wonder that I have chosen this text and to treat upon the subject of mortality.

Indeed, custom hath made it almost improper to preach on death, without a funeral; and to speak to men of their end and dissolution, without setting before their eyes an example of it. Look well therefore one upon another. What are we all, but, as it were, so many corpses? So many spectacles of mortality, rather to be numbered among the dead than among the living? Every day and hour wears away part of our lives; and so much of them as is already spent, so far are we already dead and buried. This present moment is the longest measure of our lives: what is past is dead to us; and what is to come is not yet born. How soon God

may put a final period to our present state, how few times more our pulses may beat, and this busy breath in our nostrils return to us again, we know not. So frail and uncertain are our lives, that this may be truly a funeral sermon to some one of us before the close of it. Since then we are all of us thus subject to the stroke of death, it can never be unseasonable to warn you, that you be not surprised, and taken by it unprepared.

In the words now read, you have the great statute-law of heaven; that law, which God hath passed upon all the children of men; and that is, that "it is appointed" to them "once to die."

Now that I may make way to press upon you the serious consideration of your own mortality, let me briefly mark out some things, which tend to the explanation of the words.

First. In that the proposition is laid down in the text indefinitely, "It is appointed unto men:" it is that, which is equivalent to an universal, and reacheth to all men: "It is appointed unto" *all* "men once to die."

We read of two only, in the whole book of God, who were exempted, by an extraordinary grace and peculiar privilege, from this great law of dying: and they were Enoch and Elias: of Enoch it is said, that he "walked with God, and he was not; for God took him:" Gen. v. 24: and of Elias it is said, "that he went up by a whirlwind into heaven:" 2 Kings ii. 11: the great God, after a strange and unusual manner, joined their temporal and eternal life together; making their time run itself into eternity, without any period or interruption. The Apostle also tells us, that all shall not die; to wit, at the last day, at the last appearing of Jesus Christ, there shall be a world full of persons, who shall not taste of death: all shall not die; but all shall "be changed, in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye:" 1 Cor. xv. 51, 52. These are exempted; and, being excepted, it is certain all the generations of men, from the first creation, to the last consummation of all things, are all appointed by God unto death.

Secondly. *All must die once.*

There is frequent mention made in Scripture of the first and second death. The first death is the separation of the soul from the body: the second death is the separation of the soul from God. As the union of the soul and body is the life of man; so the union of God with the soul is the life of the soul. Now believers do not die this second death; for "on such," as the Apostle speaks, "the second death hath no power:" Rev. xx. 6: they are

still united unto God, after an inconceivable and ineffable manner. As when Christ lay in the grave, though his soul was truly separated from his body yet both soul and body were hypostatically united to the Godhead; so, also, though the natural union between a believer's soul and body is dissolved by death, yet both soul and body continue mystically united unto Christ, even in their separation one from another. It is not therefore this second, but the first death, unto which all are appointed. The hand of death must untie those secret and sweet bands: those vital knots, which fasten soul and body together, must fall asunder one day in every man.

Thirdly. *It is appointed unto every man to undergo this first death.*

It is decreed and ordained by God: and that, not upon the account of any natural necessity; but for the punishment of sin. The Apostle tells us plainly, that by sin death entered into the world. Death therefore is not so much a debt due to nature, as a debt due to the avenging justice of God: for, though man at first was created in pure nature, yet was he also created in a deathless state: and death seizeth upon us, not as we are men, but as we are sinners; liable to the curse of the covenant of works, containing in it that threatening, "In the day that thou eatest thereof, thou shalt surely die." It is true, Adam, even before he sinned, had in him the combination of the same contrary qualities which we now have; and so, at least, had also the remote principles of death: but yet it is probable, that he was created with such a privilege, that he might by his own will sway and overrule the jars and discords of his elementary constitution, and continue himself in life so long as he should continue himself in obedience: however, whether it was so or otherwise, yet certain it is that death came into the world as the punishment of sin. So, then, it is not primarily man's nature, but man's sin, and the curse of the law taking hold of him, that brought in this necessity of dying. Sin is not only the sting, but the cause of death: and it gives it not only its terror, but its very being also. And, therefore, it is somewhat remarkable, that, among all the creatures in the world, man only is termed mortal: most certain it is that other creatures decay and perish, as well as he; yet, among all perishing things, man only hath that wretched denomination of being mortal, and there is good reason for it, since he alone, of all perishing things, being created immortal, voluntarily subjected himself unto death and, by his own fault, brought upon himself that name of mortal, as a brand of perpetual infamy.

And thus now I come to the subject on which I intend to insist: and that is, THE UNAVOIDABLENESS AND CERTAINTY OF DEATH.

To go about to prove this, were to lose so much time: every one grants he must die. All other questions about man are answered by peradventures: if it be demanded, whether such an embryo shall see the light; what is the answer, but, perhaps it shall, perhaps it shall not? If it is born, and it is asked, whether it shall live, and grow up to age; why, perhaps so, perhaps otherwise: if it grow up to age, and inquiry be made, shall it be rich, or shall it be poor? Honorable, or despised? Learned, or ignorant? What is the answer? Only, perhaps it shall, perhaps not. But, if it be asked, whether it shall die? The answer now is, "yes;" it is certain, without any peradventure: there is no doubt at all of this: it is appointed by God for men once to die. And, therefore, though physicians have written books on the preservation of health, yet never any wrote books on avoiding death. We need no other proof of man's mortality, but to search into the records of the grave: there lie rich and poor, strong and weak, wise and foolish, holy and profane; the rubbish of ten thousand generations heaped one upon another, and this truth that all must die, written indelibly in their dust.

I. That, therefore, which I shall do, shall be, in an applicatory way, to make some REFLECTIONS UPON THE BRUTISH STUPIDITY OF MEN; who, though they know themselves mortal, yet thrust from themselves the thoughts of death, and neglect due preparation for it. Men live in the world, as if they were arbiters of their own time; as if they should never die and come to judgment. Oh, the beastly sottishness of men, who, though they see multitudes cut down daily by the hand of death, round about them, yet live carelessly and presumptuously, as if they were privileged persons, and death durst not touch them!

Should we make inquiry into the causes of this gross stupidity and sottishness, perhaps we should find it to proceed from some of these following.

i. THE GENERALITY OF MEN ARE SO IMMERSSED AND DROWNED IN THE AFFAIRS AND PLEASURES OF LIFE, THAT ALL SERIOUS THOUGHTS OF DEATH AND PREPARATIONS FOR IT ARE SWALLOWED UP AND DEVoured BY THEM.

Their minds are taken up about other things, and their time

spent upon other matters: like a heap of ants, that busily toil to gather in their provision, not regarding the foot which is ready to tread upon them. So is it with most men: they are taken up with impertinencies and vain things. One contrives how he may melt away his days in luxury and pleasure; and, with variety of invented delights, plume the wings of time, which, in their apprehension, makes but slow haste, that so their days and hours may roll away the faster: these are such prodigals of their time, and lavish it away at that rate, as if their stock would last as long as eternity itself. Some are busily climbing up the steep ascent of honor and dignity; and are so taken up in seeking after promotions and new titles, that they forget their old style of mortal creatures. Others are plotting, with the fool in the gospel, how they may grow rich, and lay up goods for themselves for many years as they fancy; when yet they know not but God may take away their souls from them this very night: and what then remains to them of all that they have thus greedily scraped together? O vain and foolish men! are these the things, upon which you set your hearts? Must the world drink up all of your thoughts; and death, which shortly will snatch you from all your enjoyments here below, be forgotten by you?

ii. MEN PUT OFF THE THOUGHTS OF DEATH AND THEIR PREPARATIONS FOR IT, BECAUSE THEY GENERALLY LOOK UPON IT AS AFAR OFF.

This is the greatest sottishness in the world; and yet most men are too guilty of it. Those, who are young and in the prime of their days, if it be asked them what they think of death, will readily answer, that they think they ought of right and course to live till they are aged; and they, who are aged, will tell you their weaknesses and decays are not so many or so great, but they may well weather away a few more years: those, who are healthful and strong, think surely they need not prepare for dying, till God by some sickness sends them a summons; and those, whom God is pleased to vouchsafe a summons by sickness and distempers, alas, they think it is yet possible for them to escape from them again. And thus all are ready to thrust death from them, and to put the evil day afar off: and, though God hath told out to them but a few days or hours, yet they liberally and bountifully reckon upon years and ages; as if their time were not in God's hands, but their own. It is a true saying, that usually the hope of a long life is the cause of an evil life: suppose now that every one of us knew

for a certainty, that our lives must run out with the glass which is before us, that at the end of the hour God would strike us all dead upon the place, should we not all of us have more lively apprehensions of death and eternity than ever yet we have had? Should we not pour out our souls, before God requires them from us, in holy affections and fervent prayers? Should we give scope to the roving of our thoughts, and the vanity of our hearts? Should we think of such a vain pleasure, or such a worldly employment, if God now from heaven should speak audibly to us and bid us give an account of our stewardship, for we must be no longer stewards? No, certainly: it is impossible that men should thus behave themselves. And why, is it not so with you always? For aught you know, that film and bubble which holds your lives may be now breaking, your graves may be ready to be digged, and the last sand in your glass may be now running: however, certain it is, that it cannot be long before it will be so with all of us. Did we but seriously consider, by what small pins this frame of man is tacked together, it would appear to us to be no less than a miracle that we live one day, yea one hour to an end.

iii. MEN GENERALLY PUT OFF THE THOUGHTS OF DEATH AND THEIR PREPARATION FOR IT, BECAUSE OF THOSE FRIGHTFUL TERRORS AND THAT INSUPPORTABLE DREAD, WHICH SUCH APPREHENSIONS BRING WITH THEM.

Death is that, which, above all things, human nature most abhors. Oh! to think of the separation of those near and dear companions, the soul and body! of the debasement, dishonor, and horror of the grave; that there we must lie, in a bed of putrefaction, under a coverlet of worms crawling upon us, consuming and moldering away to dust in oblivion and forgetfulness! Oh! these are too sad and melancholy thoughts, for the jovial world to entertain and dwell upon. But, though the consideration of these things is very unwelcome, yea very dismal unto the minds of sinners; yet is there still far worse behind, and that which carries in it far greater terror and amazement, and that is the sin which deserves death, and the hell which follows it: for, as the Apostle says, 1 Cor. xv. 56, "the sting of death is sin." And it is no wonder, that men, who are conscious to themselves of condemning guilt, dare not think of standing before the dreadful tribunal of God; and death is God's officer to arrest them, and to bring them thither. They cannot bear the thoughts of eternal vengeance, and prepared torments, to be forever inflicted on them, by the

almighty power of an incensed God; and therefore it is no wonder, that they put far from them the thoughts of death, because their consciences tell them that that day, whensoever it comes, will be to them an evil day.

Many more reasons might be given of this brutishness of men, in putting off the thoughts of death and preparations for it; but these shall suffice.

II. The next thing shall be to lay down some CONSIDERATIONS, which may fore-arm Christians AGAINST THE FEARS AND TERRORS OF DEATH; and make them willing to submit unto this law of dying, unto which God hath subjected all men.

i. IF THE SOUL BE IMMORTAL, AS CERTAINLY IT IS, AND THAT, PARTING FROM THIS, IT ENTERS UPON A BETTER LIFE THAN THIS, WE MAY WELL THEN BE CONTENTED TO DIE UPON THAT ACCOUNT.

No man, says a Roman author, thinks death is much to be avoided, since immortality follows death. I am very sensible how hard a task it is to persuade men to be willing to die, but yet let me ask you, if you are believers, (for, in this, I speak only unto such,) what is there in death, that is so terrible to you? I know it is monstrous and full of horror, if we consider nothing but the corruption of the flesh, the ghastly paleness, the stiff, cold, and grim visage, the distorted eyes and trembling limbs of dying persons; and, afterwards, think of the repulsiveness of the grave: and, lastly, the disappearance of the visible part of man: all these considerations make death very terrible and full of horror to us. But he, who shall consider, after all this, his spiritual and invisible part, what can he see in death, which is not very desirable to him? The body rests from its labors, and the soul enjoys its reward in heaven: if you are hereby taken away from conversing with men, yet the soul is elevated to an acquaintance with angels; that, is still alive in its own nature: the soul lives forever, being placed above the common arrests of death. We find, to this purpose, after that God had tried the patience of Job by the loss of all his substance, and afterwards of all his children also, he restores to him double whatever he had taken from him: so we read in the holy story, "The Lord gave unto Job twice as much as he had before:" Job. xlii. 10: now whereas, at first, Job had three thousand camels, God restores to him six thousand; whereas, before he had seven thousand sheep, God restores to him fourteen thousand;

and so of all the rest, double the number of what he lost. But, when God comes to recompense to him the loss of his children, which doubtless were of far greater value than all the rest; whereas he had seven sons and three daughters, God restores to him the same number again, not double in these as he did in all the rest: and wherefore did God double his camels, his sheep, and his oxen, and not his children? Because his children were not so dead as were his camels, and the rest of his brute creatures: their souls remained immortal and entire still after death: so that God, in giving Job seven sons and three daughters, did double them, notwithstanding, though he gave him no more than he had at first. So, here, though we die, yet death doth us no injury: our better part survives; and, if we are believers, it survives in such inconceivable joys, as that all the pleasures of the world are but misery and wretchedness compared to them.

ii. THE WHOLE LIFE OF A CHRISTIAN IS FOUNDED UPON A HOPE THAT CANNOT BE ACCOMPLISHED BUT BY DYING.

And if so, that man's mistake must needs be inexcusable, who abhors that, which alone can bring him to the possession of his hopes and desires. Christians! what is it that you hope for? Is it not to arrive at glory, with "an innumerable host of angels, and the spirits of just men made perfect?" To see God, and to rejoice in him at a nearer hand than you now do here below? To be forever blessed in the close embraces of the sovereign good? And what other way is there to obtain this, but only by dying? Death is now made to us an inlet to glory, the very gate to heaven. It is therefore unreasonable to fear that, which is the only way to obtain that for which we hope.

iii. THIS DEATH, THOUGH SO MUCH DREADED, IS NO OTHER THAN A QUIET SLEEP.

So the Scripture often represents it to us, under the notion of sleep: "Them....which sleep in Jesus will God bring with him." Sleep is the natural resemblance of death. Sleep and death are very near akin. When we are asleep, we see not, we hear not: all our senses are locked up from the enjoyment of any worldly delights: we take no comfort in our friends, in our riches, or estates: all these are canceled out of our minds. And what more doth death do, than cancel these things out of men's memories? And yet the weary laborer lays himself down with contentment, to take his sleep until the morning; and why may not we also

lay down ourselves with the same peace and contentment in our graves, to take our rest and sleep until the morning of the resurrection? Indeed, the sleep of death is different from natural sleep; since that deprives us of natural light, but this sleep of death brings us to the vision of true inaccessible light. What then is there in death, that we should stand in dread of it? Why should that be feared by those, for whom the sting of it is already taken out? Such may safely take this serpent into their bosoms: for, though it hiss at them, yet it cannot wound or hurt them; nay, instead of wounding them, it is reconciled to them, and become one of their party. The Apostle, therefore, reckoning up the inventory of a Christian, reckons this among them: Whether "life or death....all is yours:" 1 Cor. iii. 22: and, in another place, he tells us, that to him "to live was Christ, and to die was gain:" Phil. i. 21. And well may a Christian account death among his gains: for it is the hand of death, which draws the curtain, and lets him in to see God face to face in heaven; that palace of inestimable pleasure and delight, where the strongest beams of glory shall beat fully upon our faces, and where we shall be made strong enough to bear them. Neither doth death bring any detriment to our bodies, since they shall be new molded at the resurrection; when "this mortal must put on immortality, and this corruptible must put on incorruption:" 1 Cor. xv. 53; when these dull lumps shall become impassible as the angels, subtle as a ray of light, bright as the sun, and swift as lightning. Who is there, that hath hopes of heaven, that would have this law of death reversed? Who would be confined to live always a wretched life here on the earth, which sin and sorrow share between them? A holy soul cannot but long and be impatient, in breathing forth desires after the kind office of death, to deliver it into so great and incomprehensible a glory; crying out earnestly, with the Apostle, I desire to be dissolved, "and to be with Christ, which is" best of all: Phil. i. 23.

III. Now of what GREAT IMPORTANCE this subject of man's mortality is, God, by his providence, since I last spake in this place, hath sadly evinced; and, by a near instance, hath confirmed what I then preached unto you, of the frailty and uncertainty of this present life.

Happy were it for us, if either sermons or examples might awaken us to a serious consideration, that we ourselves also must shortly die; and, it may be, as suddenly. Are we not all sub-

jected to the same attack? Hath not God's hand molded our bodies out of the same clay; and may not his fingers crumble them again into the same dust? Certainly, the cords of our tabernacles may be as easily unloosed and cut asunder, as theirs.

I have read of a great emperor, who, to engrave upon himself the deeper apprehensions of his own frailty and mortality, caused his own funeral to be solemnized while he was yet living, laying himself down in his tomb, weeping over himself, as his own mourner. If there were any advantage in this to prepare him to die at last really, by dying thus first in an emblem, we may almost daily have the same. There is not a funeral of any of our relations or acquaintance, upon which we are called to give our attendance, but, by serious and solemn reflections upon ourselves, we may make our own: and if, by beholding others nailed up in their coffins, laid down in their cold graves, and covered over with earth that they may become a feast for worms, we reckon ourselves among the number of them, we shall not be very much mistaken; for this is only but a few days to anticipate what shall shortly be our state and condition. This advantage we ourselves may make of the death of others, to look upon it as a resemblance at least of our own; what is the language of every grave which we see open its mouth to receive into it the dead body of some neighbor or acquaintance, but only this, that we also are mortal and perishing? There is not a broken skull, or a decayed bone, that lies scattered about the grave, but hath death and mortality written upon it, and calls loudly upon us to prepare ourselves to take up our abode in the same darkness and corruption with them; and if, upon every such sad occasion, we do not make a particular application thereof unto our own selves, we not only lose our friends' lives, but their very deaths also.

And yet, in this affair, which might be of great advantage to us, we are exceeding faulty: for the reflections, which we make on the death of others, are usually very impertinent, and make no lasting impressions upon us. When death comes and mows down our acquaintance and relations round about us, the reflection, which we usually make, is more upon the loss that we have sustained by their death, than upon the example they are thereby made to us of our own frailty and mortality: and, thereby, as God by his providence hath deprived us of the comfort, which we had in their lives; so we deprive ourselves of the instruction and benefit, which we might have by their death. Or, if some extraordinary circumstance, that appears in the death of others, strikes us

into serious thoughts of our own; yet, usually, they are but short-lived and fleeting: for a while, it may be, we think of human frailty, and the mutability of our present state: but these thoughts soon wear off, and we return to the same vanity and wretched security as before; for such dying meditations of death, are usually very unprofitable.

It is with most men, as it is with a flock of sheep, which graze fearlessly, till the shepherd rushes in among them, and lays hold of one of them for the slaughter; and this presently frights them; making them leave their food, and run scattering about the field: but, no sooner is the tumult over, than they flock together again; and feed as securely, without thoughts of death or danger, as before. So, truly, is it with most men: when either the report is spread abroad that such or such a person is dead, and it may be suddenly, by some sudden and unexpected stroke; or when they are called to visit some dying person, where they behold departing pangs, distorted eyes, quivering limbs, a wan and ghastly corpse, the image of death in all its lively terrors; if they have any remains of natural tenderness, it must needs strike them into pensiveness, to think that one day this must be their own case, and that therefore it behooves them to be in continual preparation for this last and dreadful change: but, no sooner is the dead interred, and the grave filled up again, but all these sage and serious thoughts vanish, and they return to the same excess of sin and pleasure as before. This is the brutish folly and sottishness of most men.

But oh, why should not men always keep alive vigorous thoughts and meditations of death! Are they not always alike mortal? Are they not as much subject to the arrest of death at other times, as when they see examples of mortality before their eyes? The law stands still in force, unrepealed in heaven, that "it is appointed unto men once to die." Indeed, it fares with such as these, as ordinarily it doth with malefactors, who fear not the penalty of the law till they see it executed upon others. Let us therefore act rationally as men: and, so long as we are in danger, be kept by that danger prepared to entertain that, which we know is irreversibly appointed unto us.

IV. But now, beside this general appointment of God, that all shall die, there is a PARTICULAR APPOINTMENT, which reacheth to every particular circumstance of man's death; the time when, the manner how, we shall die. These are unalterably determined, in God's secret counsel.

i. GOD HATH PUNCTUALLY AND EXACTLY DETERMINED THE TIME OF OUR DEATH TO A VERY MOMENT.

The great God, in whose hands our lives, our breath, and all our ways are, turns up our glass; and puts such a measure of sand into it, and no more; it is he, who prefixes it to run to such a length of time, and then determines it shall run no longer: it is he, who is Lord of all time, that writes our names upon so many days and hours as we shall live, as upon so many leaves of his book: and it is impossible for us to live one day or hour, which hath not our name written upon it by him from all eternity: it is God, who sets every one the bounds of their living, as well "as the bounds of their habitation:" Acts xvii. 26, beyond which they shall not be able to pass: the embryo, that dies before ever it sees the light, fills up its time appointed by God: as well as he, who lives to decrepit old age. And, therefore, though the Scripture and we use to say, such or such an one is taken away "in the midst of his days;" yet, simply in itself considered, that is impossible; the whole tale of days, which God hath appointed to every one, must be fulfilled; and that to a very moment, according as the number of them is set down by God from all eternity; such expressions as these denote no more, than either that God cuts them off in the full strength and vigor of their years, when yet they might, according to the course of nature and human probability, have lived longer; or else, comparing the shortness of their lives with the length of others, God seems to break it off in the very midst, before he had finished his work. I shall not enter into a dispute, whether the term of life be fixed or moveable: methinks Job hath fully stated and determined the question: "Is there not, says he, an appointed time to man upon earth? Are not his days also like the days of a hireling?" Job vii. 1: now a hireling hath a time of service prefixed; and, when this is expired, he is discharged from his labor: God hath sent all men into the world as so many hirelings; and, as soon as these days are expired, he takes them from their labor to their reward. "Are not my days as the days of a hireling?" So Job speaks also, in another chapter, concerning man: "His days are determined: the number of his months are with thee: thou hast appointed his bounds that he cannot pass:" Job xiv. 5: what can be more punctual and particular? It is true, however, that, though God hath thus numbered out our days, and set us our bounds; yet we may well say, that, whoever dies, might have lived longer, had they made use of the right means: as Martha said unto our Saviour, John xi. 21; "Lord,

if thou hadst been here, my brother had not died;" so may we say, "If such and such means had been used, and such remedies applied, this or that person had not died;" but, withal, we must observe also, that that God, who hath prefixed to every one his term of life, hath also ordained, in his own counsel and purpose, that those means, which are proper to prolong life beyond that term, should, through some unavoidable mistake or mishap, either not be known or not used. This therefore may be of great support unto us, as against all inordinate fears of our own death, so against all inordinate grief and sorrow for the death of others; to consider, that all our "times are in God's hands;" he measures out every day to us; and, as he hath appointed bounds to us beyond which we shall not pass, so also hath he appointed that we shall certainly reach unto those bounds. His all-wise providence disposeth of the meanest and smallest concerns of our lives; and, therefore, much more of our lives themselves: and, if a hair of our heads cannot, much less shall not we ourselves "fall to the ground without our Heavenly Father."

ii. AS GOD HATH APPOINTED THE EXACT CRITICAL HOUR, SO ALSO THE PARTICULAR MANNER OF OUR DEATH.

It is he, who appoints, whether it shall be sudden or foreseen; by diseases, or by casualty; whether the thread of our life shall be snapped in pieces by some unexpected accident, or worn and fretted away by some tedious and lingering consumption, or burned asunder by some fiery fever. In whatever manner or shape death may appear to us, is a secret known only unto God; but this we know, that it is always his messenger, and wears his livery; and all the circumstances of our death are of God's appointment, as well as our death itself. And, in whatever shape it shall appear to us, if we diligently endeavor by a holy life to prepare ourselves for it, it shall not be frightful or terrible to us.

V. Let us now make some PRACTICAL IMPROVEMENT of this.

Use i. If God thus unalterably appoints to us our last period, if he hath thus appointed us to die, if all men are concluded under that irrevocable law: LET THIS THEN SERVE TO CONVINCE US OF THE GROSS AND NOTORIOUS FOLLY, OF SETTING OUR AFFECTIONS EAGERLY UPON THIS PRESENT WORLD, a world, which we must shortly leave behind us.

Death, within a very little while, will most certainly pluck us from it; and it will prove a violent rending to us, if our affections are inordinately set upon any thing here below. It was a strange and perverse use also, that the ancient heathen made of the necessity of dying; when, in their feasts, their custom was to bring in the resemblance of an anatomy to their guests, thereby to excite them to mirth and voluptuousness, while they should relish such delights as were then before them, because shortly they must be as much dust and bones as what they saw: like those whom the Apostle mentions, 1 Cor. xv. 32, who said, "Let us eat and drink, for to-morrow we die." But how much better use doth the same Apostle teach us to make of this, when, in the same epistle, he tells us, "But this I say, brethren, the time is short?" What then? Why, says he, "It remaineth, therefore, that both they, that have wives, be as though they had none: and they, that weep, as though they wept not; and they, that rejoice, as though they rejoiced not; and they, that buy, as though they possessed not; and they, that use this world, as not abusing it: for the fashion of this world passeth away." Death, one would think, should beat down the price of the world, in every wise man's esteem. Why should we lay out our affections upon those things, from which we may be ravished in a moment? Both they and we perish in the using of them: they are dying comforts; and we must die also, who enjoy them. Oh! what folly then is it to toil and wear away our lives in pursuing such vain things, from which we may be snatched before we can cast another look at them! Grim death will soon convince us, that "all is" but "vanity and vexation of spirit," upon which we here set our eyes and hearts.

USE ii. Seeing, by the appointment of God, we must all shortly die, LET US BE PERSUADED TO BE ALWAYS IN A READINESS AND PREPARATION FOR IT.

Our souls are immortal, and must live forever; and, when our bodies die and fall into the dust, they immediately enter into an estate which is forever unalterable.

Here I shall only lay down a few directions, and so conclude.

1. *Wean your hearts from an inordinate love of the world.*

Death must and will pluck you from it: and, oh! it will be a violent rending, if your affections be glued to it. Consider that all things in this present world are fading and perishing; but your precious souls are ever living and immortal. Be not, therefore, unequally yoked: join not your ever-living souls to dying com-

forts. This is a tyranny, worse than that, which was exercised by those of old, who tied living bodies to dead corpses. Oh! what a sad parting hour will it be to thee, when thou shalt go into another world, and leave behind thee all that thou countest good in this! How wilt thou protract and linger; and wishfully look back, upon all these precious vanities, and dear nothings and follies, in which here thou placedst thy happiness and contentment! But, when the heart sits loose from all these things, with what satisfaction shall we be able to die: accounting what we lose by death to be no great matter, because what we gain thereby will be infinitely more to our advantage!

2. Would you be prepared for death? *Beware, then, that you do not defer your repentance one day or hour longer, upon any presumption of the continuance of your life.*

Death depends not upon the warning of a sickness. God doth not always afford it; but, sometimes, he doth execution, before he shoots off his warning-piece. And why may it not be so with you? However, it is possible your sickness may be such, as may render you incapable of doing your last good office for your soul. But, if it should be otherwise, yet this I am sure of, it is the unfittest time in all your life; to be then casting up your accounts, when you should be giving them up; to have your evidences for heaven then to clear up to your souls, when you should produce and show them for your support and comfort.

3. *Live every day so, as if every day were your last and dying day, and the very next day allotted to you unto eternity.*

If it be not so, it is more than any one of us knows: and, since we have no assurance of one day or hour longer, it is but reason and wisdom to look upon every day, as that which may prove our very last.

4. *Be constant in the exercise of a holy life; and always doing that, which you would be content Christ should find you doing when he comes to summon you before his bar.*

Think with thyself, if thou wert now upon thy sick bed, and hadst received the sentence of death, and sawest thy friends stand mourning round about thee but not able to help thee; what would be thy thoughts and thy discourse then? Let the same thoughts and the same discourse fill up every day and hour of thy life: for thou knowest not, whether now this moment thou art not as near death, as if thy friends and relations, yea and thy physicians also, despaired of thy life, and had given thee over for dead.

5. *Labor to get an assurance of a better life, and this will prepare you for a temporal death.*

When you and all things in the world must take leave of one another and part forever, then to have the sense of the love of God, of an interest in Jesus Christ, and the sight and view of your own graces; these will bear up your heart in a dying hour: these things are immortal, as your souls are: and will enter into heaven with you, and abide there with you to eternity. Oh, whom will it not comfort, to think that death will change his rill into a fountain? Though, here, our water sometimes fails us; yet, in heaven, whither we are going, we shall bathe ourselves in an infinite ocean of delights. Whoever hath such an assurance as this, cannot but welcome death; embracing it, not only with contentment, but with delight; and, while the soul is struggling and striving to unclasp itself, and to get loose from the body, it cannot but say, with holy longings and pantings, "Come, Lord Jesus, come quickly." Amen.

MISCELLANEOUS SERMONS.

XV.

A DISCOURSE ON THE BLESSEDNESS OF THEM THAT DIE IN THE LORD.

And I heard a voice from heaven, saying unto me, write, blessed are the dead which die in the Lord, from henceforth: yea, saith the Spirit, that they may rest from their labors; and their works do follow them: REV. xiv. 13.

NATURE hath impressed on us such horrid and dreadful notions of death, and represented its visage so wan and ghastly, that, though nothing is more certain than that we must all die, yet nothing is more difficult than to persuade men to die willingly.

The philosophers have ransacked the whole magazine of reason; and have put into our hands all the weapons, which may help to embolden us to encounter this king of terrors: yet, by their great preparations, instead of diminishing its dread, they have made it appear more fearful. And, indeed, whatsoever specious arguments reason can produce, they are rather for pomp than for use: there is not any thing in the sage philosophers for the "Contempt of Death," which they offer to the world, but, if rationally examined, will prove no solid ground of peace in a dying hour: all, that is inculcated by them, is either concerning the necessity of dying; or, freedom by it from the care and trouble of this life; or, lastly, the hope of a future reward. Now what is it to tell us, that death is the common lot of all; and that every compounded being hath those fatal principles in it, which will certainly work its dissolution; and therefore it becomes the reason and spirits of men, to entertain the fate under which they fall, with a constancy immovable? Alas! what comfort is this, seeing the inevitableness is a thing which renders it so terrible! whereas that freedom, which it gives us from the cares and troubles of this life, is but like the change of a fever into a lethargy, that brings such a gloomy quietness, wherein, as there is no sense of torment, neither is there of ease. Indeed, what they speak of a future reward is dry, or mean and sordid, in comparison with that solid joy, which God hath

promised to us in his word: yet could reason alone make our right to it certain and evident, it would be a strong support against the fear of death, and a sovereign antidote against its envenomed sting. But reason hath prepared places of punishment, as well as bliss: and, besides, the consciences of all men have discovered to them that guilt, of which their reason can never discover an expiation; and so, instead of arming them against the fear of death, reason redoubleth its terrors, by proving us transgressors of the law of nature.

You see, then, that the best support, which reason can give, is not death-proof. The last encounter, that all must maintain against that last enemy, is too rough and boisterous for such arguments as these to make good. If men's consolations are no better, it will fare with them as with cunning fencers in a confused battle, which will soon put by all their artificial designs.

Indeed, that, which can make men meet death with undaunted boldness, must be something below reason; rashness, or human boldness: and something above reason; as divine grace and revelation.

Therefore our blessed Apostle, seeing the calamities, persecutions, and martyrdoms which befell the Church; that, as it was planted by the blood of Christ, so it was to be increased by the blood of his own members; that he might encourage them with unshaken resolution to encounter with their many deaths, he fetcheth not his arguments from the faint and gloomy discourses of reason, but from the infallible testimony of Divine revelation: "I heard a voice from heaven, saying unto me, Write, Blessed are the dead which die in the Lord." But, lest this should be challenged by all, and so made a blessing as universal as their mortality, the Apostle enters a caveat against the most part of the world, and limits this blessing to them that die in the Lord: that is, either to those who die for the Lord, (and so the phrase may import suffering martyrdom for the name and profession of Christ,) and wade through their own blood to that heaven which the Lord hath opened to them by his; or else they, who die in the true faith of Christ, united to him as members of his body-mystical.

And, indeed, if we consider the terrors of a natural death, but much more the terrors of martyrdom, it is no more than needful, to have the blessing spoken of under such a doleful state, confirmed to us by the testimony of a heavenly voice. Think of the severe preparations of dying and languishing diseases; the uneasy

tossings, fire in the spirits, incessant groans, and the mournful echo from weeping friends; the quivering limbs, distorted eyes, fallen jaws; the agonies of the soul, and the working of itself from the earth oppressing of it, and darting itself from under the body by which it is fastened to the earth: think what it is, after so many disorders of the soul engaging themselves, being taken from its dearest companion; the earthly part left by death as a spectacle to its dearest relations, and to be by them delivered up as a prey to the revolting sepulcher. Would any one believe, that such a state as this is to be blessed, without a voice from heaven assuring of it? Those, whom God highly honors, every limb of whose body is a scene of a tragedy, upon whom the enraged persecutors have made an experiment of their wit in new-found cruelties, when it lay all mangled and weltering in its own gore, under the most exquisite torments that men could entail; would you think them in a blessed condition? Why, as their sufferings were beyond what human nature could bear; so also was their support from those strong consolations of God, (let down into their souls, whereby they tired out their tormentors, despising death, not accepting deliverance, through the assurance of a heavenly revelation,) beyond the apprehensions of human reason.

I. This BLESSING of theirs is branched out in two particulars: rest from their labors; their works do follow them.

i. To begin with the first, their REST FROM THEIR LABORS

1. *They rest from the turmoils and vexations of this life.*

This life is nothing but a rush of business, a swarm of employments; having more of the sting than the honey in it. If we be rich in the world, this makes us spread wider, and stand the fairer mark for trouble. If we are in a high degree in the world, that only satisfies our interest, and gives every cross and affliction an advantage to wound us in many concerns: if we are mean and low, as it exposeth us to the contempt and injury of others, so it engageth us to rescue ourselves from their pressures and power; and, by our toil and pains, we lose the comforts of life, only to gain the conveniences of it. Even those petty inconsiderable enjoyments, which are but for the bare support of life, cause such care and trouble, such aching hearts and weary heads, that they turn our bread into stones, and our fish into scorpions. If we have much business in the world, our calling becomes a temptation and a burden to us: if we have none, we become burdens to our-

selves and others. God hath written vexation upon every condition: if Providence create not trouble for us, our own folly will. We all, like spiders, spend our time and care to weave a web out of our own bowels: and we spend more to get a prey, than that prey, when taken, will again repay us. If any flaw be in our designs, if any cross that intervenes doth break them, then they become a vexation and a discontent unto us. Thus hath man made himself a drudge to that, over which God hath made him a lord. The sweat of Adam's brow streams along with us, and the curse with it; and, though we toil in the world, yet it brings forth nothing but thorns and briars, which pierce us through with many sorrows: but death will shortly lay us to bed in our graves, where, as Job speaks, "the weary are at rest:" Job iii. 17, and all our cares, sorrows and troubles will vanish as soon as our heads touch that pillow. "There is no work," no "device.....in the grave, whither thou" art going: that is a deep repose and sweet retirement, where we shall have none of the afflictions nor troubles of this life to interrupt us. And the soul, being regardless of the poor concerns here in its passage to heaven, shakes off from its wings that mire and dirt wherewith it was clogged here, in conversing with earthly things; and associates itself with the whole company of Angels, Patriarchs, Saints, and "the spirits of just men made perfect," and there keeps an eternal festival.

2. *They rest from all the sorrows and sufferings of this life.*

What is our life, but a bubble? Our sighs are the air, and our tears the water, that make it. The first possession, which we take of the world, is by crying; and there is nothing, which we hold by a surer tenure, than our grief. Tears are the inheritance of our eyes: either our sufferings or our sins call for them: and nothing can dry them up, but the dust of the grave. Sometimes we lose our dear friends and relations: the tribute, which we owe to their memories, must be paid down by tears. Sometimes, their ungodly practices torment us; when, by their excesses, they hasten their own interest in our hopes. Sometimes, compassion to other men's sufferings calls for our sorrow; as if we had not grief enough in our own bowels, but we must call for foreign succors to augment them. Our many diseases waste us, and our grinding pains break us; and indeed they were more intolerable, but that they hasten on that death, which will put a period to all our miseries: we shall not then concern ourselves in our groans for the loss of our dear friends, nor for the evil courses or calamities of others: it concerns us nothing then, what foul breath blasts our good name, nor what

unworthy foot treads upon our grave: here, a little pain molest us; there, whole limbs sometimes fall down and crumble into dust, without disturbing that quiet rest, which buries all the sorrows of this life in a profound oblivion; and our souls shall ascend to that place of perfect joy, where neither sorrow nor suffering durst yet appear.

3. *They shall rest from the labors, to which a corrupt and sinful heart puts them to.*

And this is that, which indeed makes it such a blessed rest, where our corruptions shall, at once, cease to act and cease to be. The only thing, which makes God's commands and services so difficult and grievous, is the remainder of sin which still cleaves to us; which both deadens our hearts to what is good, and makes us averse to it. But death will shortly give us rest from these.

(1) We shall rest from all the labors, which we take with a *heavy and dull heart*, in the ways of God.

We stand in need now of much quickening grace, to act and excite these lumps of lead that lie in our breasts: we are continually tugging at them, to get them a little further, and to raise them up a little higher towards heaven: and it is the great disquietude of our lives, that we find these hearts of ours so heartless and listless to what is holy and spiritual. But it will not be long, ere we shall rest from this labor. We are now like birds of heavy bodies, which are too weighty for their wings; which, when they would be soaring toward heaven, can but run fluttering up and down upon the surface of the earth. Yet these earthly clogs shall shortly drop off: we shall be all wing-free from that dullness, distraction, and weariness, which now afflict us: when our affections shall be always intent, and not languishing; always burning, and not wasting: and every motion of our souls shall shoot themselves to God, as quick as lightning, and yet as constant as the sunbeams. You, who are outstript by the weakest Christians here, shall there be able to keep pace with the angels themselves.

(2) We shall rest from the labors, which we take with an *averse and opposite heart*.

There is that reluctanee in the carnal part to what is holy and spiritual, that we cannot bring ourselves to the performance of duty without much grief and conflict; the flesh lusting against the spirit, and the spirit against the flesh: and, when God calls for spiritual thoughts and holy affections, the corruption of our fleshly hearts sends up noisome vapors, which corrupt and infect the good we do. This is that, which makes the work toilsome. But it shall

not be long, ere that, which hinders, shall be removed: and though we are now under a sad necessity of sinning, then we shall be under a blessed necessity of serving God; and shall find no more trouble therein, than we do in those actions, which we cannot but do. This is that rest, which we shall shortly enjoy from the turmoils and vexations of this life; a rest from the sorrows and sufferings of this life; a rest from the labors to which a corrupt heart puts us.

ii. Now, that this rest might not seem only to be a mere negative thing, a mere freedom from pain and labor, such as a mere beast enjoys, and far from being that consummated blessing which those that "die in the Lord" enjoy, my text subjoins, **THEIR WORKS SHALL FOLLOW THEM.**

1. This may be understood of *the works themselves.*

They follow them to heaven, and are there performed by them in glory: the same works end in earth, and enter into heaven with them. As they were performed here weakly and imperfectly, so there they shall be performed with a most absolute perfection. Therefore, whatever hath been spoken of this rest, it must not be understood as if the glorified saints and angels were inactive; and enjoyed in heaven only a long vacation; and lay down to rest upon sweet flowery banks in pleasant shadowy groves; and, without fear and care, laughed away an eternity: no, no; their rest is operative; they are continually blessing and praising God; and ascribing honor and glory "to him, that sits upon the throne, and to the Lamb forever and ever;" continually beholding and admiring God; rejoicing in him, and in one another's mutual happiness. This is that work of heaven, which shall never grow toilsome nor grievous to them.

2. Their works shall follow them; that is, *the reward of their works.*

This is so great, that neither eye hath seen, nor ear hath heard, neither hath it entered into the heart of man to conceive, what the Lord hath prepared for those that love him. If Paul were now to preach to you; and to encourage you against the fear of death, from the consideration of that infinite glory and reward which are laid up for you after death; possibly you would expect that he, who had suffered a translation, should at his return make some relation of it, discovering to you what the riches and glory of that place are: and yet, when he purposely relates this his voyage in the other world, he tells us no more than this, that he "was caught up into Paradise," and that he heard words unutterable, "which it

is not lawful for a man to utter:" 2 Cor. xii. 4-11. It is so great, that it cannot be fully known till it be fully enjoyed. The Scripture seems to labor for expression to set forth the greatness of it; it is called a remaining rest, inaccessible light, fresh and overflowing pleasures, an incorruptible inheritance, a kingdom that cannot be shaken. To speak thus, in general, of that heavenly glory, would be more accommodated to the greatness of the subject: but yet it would be more encouragement and satisfaction to treat of it, in particular, so far as our conceptions will reach to it.

Now this unspeakable happiness doth chiefly consist in these things.

(1) In the immediate *vision and fruition* of God, the soul's chief and most satisfying good.

God is now to us the spring-head of our mercies and comforts; but we lie below at the fall of the spring, and draw refreshments from him only through the conduit-pipes of providences and ordinances, and live upon second-hand enjoyments: but, in heaven, we shall lie close to the fountain itself; and shall drink in divine communications, as they flow immediately from God, without having them deadened and flattened in the conveyance. Now, we behold God through a glass darkly: in heaven, we shall see him face to face, and know him as we are known. And, if it causeth now such raptures of joy in us, when God sometimes darts in but half a glance of his eye upon the soul; oh then within what bounds can our joy contain itself, when we shall constantly fix our eyes upon him, and steadfastly behold his face? that face, from which the most glorious angels, as conscious of their own unworthiness to behold it, do cover and veil their own. Now, when God gives us some glorious discoveries of himself, we are ready to faint and melt down under them: certainly, in heaven, when we shall lie under the glorious rays of the Deity, beating so fully upon us; it is so great, that there were no living there, did not the same God strengthen as well as fill our capacities. This is that beatific vision, that heaven of heavens, that glory, in the sight of which the angels are satisfied; wherein God shall bestow upon us a clearer eye than that of faith, and be always present with us in a nearer way than that of comfort.

(2) The happiness of heaven consisteth in the *society*, which the saints converse with forever.

And they are holy angels, and "the spirits of just men made perfect." Here on earth, the angels are given for our guardians; in heaven, for our companions: and, though we are the adopted,

and they the natural children of God's great family; yet shall they rejoice with us, that we, who were strangers, are taken in to be heirs with them of that estate of which their rebellious brethren were disinherited. As for the glorified saints, what numerous troops of Apostles, Prophets, and holy martyrs shall we converse with! and possibly we shall know them all by name. The disciples, at the transfiguration of Christ, knew Moses and Elias: and, possibly, it was by revelation: and so it may be in heaven.

(3) The happiness of heaven consists in the *work*, in which we shall be there employed to eternity.

Their works shall follow them; and they shall follow them, as part of their reward. Now, on earth, we look upon the works of holiness as our task and burden: yet, in heaven, we shall look upon them as our joy. Delight springs only from two things: the one, is the adaptation of the object to our capacities: the other, is the adaptation of actions to our faculties. This proportion is the most exact in heaven: therefore, there, is the chiefest delight. Now, in heaven, our capacities shall become heavenly and spiritual; and therefore only spiritual and heavenly objects will suit and delight our faculties: it shall be then as natural to us to do the will of God, as now it is to the most wicked sinner to disobey him. And, indeed, the quality of the work that we shall there do, is such as must needs affect us with infinite delight: here, on earth, God calls a Christian to the severe duties of mortification, self-denial, and taking up the cross; but the works of heaven are all smooth, consisting only in these two things, love, and expression of love and praise: this is the work of heaven. Here, an angel sings to a saint; and, there, a saint to an angel: "Blessing, and honor, and glory, and power, be unto him that sitteth upon the throne, and unto the Lamb forever and ever;" all joining in one common choir and heavenly echoing, and singing hallelujahs to eternity.

(4) The saints' happiness consists in that additional *glory*, which shall forever rest upon their bodies.

And this shall certainly follow them, though God take a day for the payment of it. This is it, which makes them complete: this they shall have also in the great day, as a reward of their works. Now, here, though the expectation of this glory be much more comfortable than the inquiry into it can be certain; yet, because divers things are generally granted and piously believed, I shall briefly propound them to you.

The glory of the body in heaven is held generally to consist in its

Integrity and spirituality.

[1] It shall be raised *an entire and perfect body*.

Every member shall become such, as may be most serviceable to the use of the soul, and as may be most capable of the access of glory: and, though many of them lose their offices, yet still they retain their places. When we shall be discharged from the necessities of life, our members shall be discharged from those troublesome offices: yet shall they not therefore cease to be necessary: though they are discharged of their offices, yet they are reserved for the Judge's sentence. The body shall be then free from all the consequences of sin, and from all the forerunners of death to which here we are incident: from all outward decays, aches, weaknesses; from pain and diseases, corruptions and distempers: "it is sown in corruption; it is raised in incorruption: it is sown in weakness; it is raised in power: it is sown in dishonor; it is raised in glory:" 1 Cor. xv. 42, 43. And, therefore, as Tertullian speaks, "If God should not raise men entire, then he should not raise them up from the dead; for, if any part be not raised, we are as to that part still dead." And therefore God raiseth them up entirely and fully from those decays, to which we are here subject.

[2] The glory of the body consists chiefly in its *spirituality*.

Not that our bodies shall be changed into spiritual substances; but they shall be endowed with spiritual qualities: and they are three.

1st. The bodies of the saints in heaven shall shine with a bright and *dazzling light*: they "shall shine as the brightness of the firmament.....and as the stars, forever and ever:" Dan. xii. 3.

And this, it is thought, shall proceed from their approach to God and immediate communion with him: as Moses's face by long conversing with God did so shine, that the Israelites were dazzled so as they could not behold him. And, partly, this will be from the radiancy of the soul's glory, which, being so great, will then diffuse itself abroad upon the body. A cheerful heart makes a cheerful countenance: and, truly, a glorious soul will put a glory upon the body also; which shall then be made more capable to receive every impression from the soul.

2dly. The body shall be endowed with *impassibility*.

Neither subject to decays within, nor injuries without; nor

standing in any need of those supports of rest, sleep, and food, whereby they are sustained in life.

3dly. They shall be endowed with wonderful *agility*; moving to and fro, as the will commands, without any difficulty or weariness.

Possibly, they shall be able to keep pace with the angels themselves in their motion. And, indeed, this agility is but requisite in so spacious a place as heaven.

Now if we add to these, the regulation of the affections, and the perfect operation of the senses; the corporeal sight of the body of Jesus Christ, which we may bodily approach, and, with Thomas, put our hands into the print of the nails and our fingers into his side; by this we may well conclude, that our souls cannot well conceive what our bodies shall be then.

Thus I have given you, as it were, a map of the heavenly Canaan. But, as it is with other maps, so it is here: every thing is represented much less, and far short of what it is in reality; but it will be no great mistake when we come to heaven, if we find things far more and better than they were represented.

II. APPLICATION.

USE i. If then they, who die in the Lord, have such an ample reward to follow them, THIS SHOULD FIRST ENGAGE THEM TO A HOLY LIFE.

Think you, that those, who spend their time in lofty vanity and impertinent sinful pleasures in this world, can have any other but a doleful catastrophe? What works have they to follow them, but such as will drag them down to torments? Think you, then, that a parting prayer, a slight "Lord, have mercy!" when you are just going out of the world, will be judged enough to break through the numberless crowd of your sins, and waft your souls over into everlasting blessedness? Believe it, such as hath been your first, such shall be your final state. Hazard not, therefore, your precious and immortal souls upon the treacherous resolutions of a sick-bed; and think not that a charitable legacy will compound with God for a sinful life: the way to heaven will be so obstructed by your former guilt, that these your late good works cannot follow you. Then a man resigns his soul with confidence into the hands of God, when he can reflect upon a well-spent life, and appeal to God with Hezekiah, "Remember, oh

Lord, how I have walked before thee in truth and with a perfect heart, and have done that which is good in thy sight; 2 Ki. xx. 3. All other things will be but miserable comforts in a dying hour; and, will then vanish and disappear. The rich man's gold will not follow him to the tribunal, to bribe his impartial Judge; nor the honorable man's greatness give him a more favorable audience at the last judgment: nor shall the orator's eloquence then follow him, to cover over a bad cause; but he shall certainly miscarry, if he hath not made sure of a more powerful Advocate to plead for him. These things will leave the poor soul in its greatest agonies and despair: and then it will appear, that despised holiness and slighted piety will be the only sure companions which will stick to us, even then, when riches, and learning, and all that is idolized by the world, will prove nothing but witnesses of our guilt and condemnation.

USE II. This may COMFORT US AGAINST THE DEATH OF OUR FRIENDS, WHO, WE KNOW, LIVED PIOUSLY AND RIGHTEOUSLY, desiring to please God in all things, and testifying the truth and soundness of their faith in Christ by their good works.

If such men be not blessed, then God created all mankind to die accursed: but, if they be blessed, and blessed with eternal rest and an inconceivable reward, what mean then these sad hearts and wet eyes? What do these tears evidence, but that you think them miserable, or else yourselves so? For their state is so infinitely glorious, that they are preferred to be kings, and favorites of the King of kings; where they flow in pleasures and eternal raptures, which they incessantly enjoy: and, had you any interest in their advancement, it would change your affections of grief and sorrow for them into sweet exultation and admiration of their joy and triumph. Think you, after they have tasted of those rivers of pleasure at the right hand of God, that ever they would be content to return to you again? Or that God should condemn them to live longer in the world? And when you, in their lifetime attested your love to them by the sweet harmony and blending of your affections with theirs, mourning when they mourned, and rejoicing when they rejoiced; what a solecism of friendship is it for you to weep now, when they sing and shout for joy; and to have your eyes swollen with tears, when God hath wiped away all tears from theirs? Is it your own loss which you lament; because they are taken from you, with whom, nay for whom, you would willingly have died, and given up yourselves to the death? Even

this is but the effect of self-love, and shows that you are more concerned in your own contentment than in their glory; and, that you might enjoy them yourselves, you would keep them from their near and intimate enjoyment of God. Can you not, for a while, dispense with their absence, for their advantage; and make up the comfort which you want in their presence, by the comfort which you have in the assurance of their happiness? What our Saviour saith to his disciples, John xiv. 28, that may I say to you: If you love them, you will rejoice, because they are gone to their Father. And this separation, by this absence of theirs, is but for a short time: do you but tread the paths of their example and follow their track, and, as their works went before them to heaven, so yours shall follow you; where you shall rest from all your sorrows and troubles; where no affliction nor discontentment shall overcast your perfect joy; where, without fear of another separation, you shall be satisfied in the enjoyment of one another, and all in the enjoyment of God.

III. I have now finished my text; and I would finish my discourse too, but that I should much wrong the PERSON, whose funeral rites we now celebrate, should I let pass in silence those virtues with which God endowed him; and should wrong you too, in withholding so excellent a pattern for your intimation.

Doubtless, his converse among you was with moderation, gravity and prudence: which were so natural to him in all the passages of his life, that they have imprinted on you so deep characters, as will redeem his name from oblivion, and make it precious to you.

In his younger years, his employment called him beyond the seas; where the blessing of God followed him; where he did not exchange his principles, nor barter away his good education; but returned to his friends with his mind untainted, and improved both to their joy and his own profit.

He reckoned himself but a steward of that estate, with which God blessed him: his spiritual eyes and hands sought out the necessities of others, to relieve them. Those places of trust to which he was called, he managed with singular prudence and fullness.

The Psalmist gives us the character of a good man, Ps. cxii. 5. "He will guide his affairs with discretion." Such a discreet man was he; who laid his business in such order and method, that,

though his employments were many and weighty, yet they never became cumbersome nor unwieldy.

And as for his relative duties, wherein the chief glory of a Christian appears, these he performed with much tenderness; whether as a husband or a father. Indeed, the whole course of his life was tempered with such sweetness, meekness, humility and courtesy: as being ready to do good to any, free from cold reserve, and having a winning disposition, whereby he gained as many friends as necessary employments gained him acquaintance.

His piety towards God, which is the crown of all other excellencies, shone forth with a mutual awe and reverence, which possessed his heart with an affectionate seriousness, becoming that awful sense of God's omniscience and omnipresence, making it his design in all things to please God.

His last sickness he underwent with patience worthy a Christian. By his submission to the hand of God, he evidenced the acknowledgment of his sovereignty, whereby he might do with him what he pleased; and yet trusted in his goodness, whereby he knew he would do with him what was best for him. Desirous he was, if the Lord saw good, to live longer: and he prayed, if possible, that the bitter cup might pass from him: and, indeed, the strongest grace and clearest assurance doth not oblige any to extirpate natural desires: St. Paul himself, who, 2 Cor. v. 4, was caught up into Paradise, and had a full discovery of the heavenly joy, yet was loth to be stripped out of the body, though he was sure to be clothed immediately with the robes of life and glory. When his disease and sickness increased upon him, his chief care was, to look, search, and examine his evidences for heaven, which, after some scrutiny and doubt, it produced: he at last acquired, to his own unspeakable comfort and the satisfaction of his acquaintance, a sedate joy; and then resigned his spirit into the hands of the Lord, his Maker; and now rests from his labors, in that eternal rest, which Christ hath promised to such as wait for his appearing. Amen.

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Those marked * are the subject of distinct Discourses.

Those marked † are treated exegetically, and are accompanied by an interpretation or paraphrase, more or less extended, according to the design of the author in their citation.

The remaining texts are cited, either as proof texts establishing some position, doctrine, or opinion held by the author, or are used in the way of accommodation, though they receive light from the connection in which they are quoted, and the purpose to which they are applied.

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